



Chicago Mayor Apologizes, Vows Reforms Amid Protests
Protesters block traffic at an intersection at the City and County building during a march calling for Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez to resign Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, in Chicago. (AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast) Page 5



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New draft of global climate accord leaves many major issues unresolved

KARL RITTER

ANGELA CHARLTON

Associated Press

LE BOURGET, France (AP)

— With just two days left to reach a deal, negotiators at the world climate talks released a new draft Wednesday that drops the most radical ideas — including an international tribunal to punish polluters — but leaves major issues unresolved, such as who should pay to help the most vulnerable nations cope with global warming. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry challenged diplomats to reach agreement by Friday's deadline, promising American funding for low-lying island nations and other countries hit hardest by the rising seas and extreme weather that scientists attribute to man-made emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

"Our aim can be nothing less than a steady transformation of the global economy," Kerry said.

The new draft released by the U.N. climate agency is 29 pages, down from a 43-page version issued Saturday. There are about 100 places where there are decisions still to be made, including multiple options left in brackets, or blank spaces.

"We have never been this close to a climate change agreement," said Maldives

Environment Minister Thorig Ibrahim, chairman of an alliance of island nations. "It's now up to us ministers to show the leadership needed to make hard decisions that put the interests of people and the planet ahead of shortsighted politics." Ministers from more than 190 countries are trying to craft the first climate accord asking all nations to reduce or slow their emissions. The previous agreement, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, required only rich countries to do so.

Most man-made emissions come from the burning of oil, coal and gas — fossil fuels that meet about 80 percent of global energy demand. Replacing them with renewable sources like wind and solar power requires big investments, which poor countries say they can't afford without help. A previous draft suggested that intellectual property rights to clean technology be removed so that developing countries such as India could get access to it more easily. That was deleted from the latest draft.

A call for an International Tribunal of Climate Justice to punish rich countries that fail to live up to their commitments was also dropped, as were references to emissions from aviation and shipping.

But the document doesn't

settle the sensitive question of whether advanced developing countries such as China and oil-rich Arab nations should join industrialized countries in providing financial aid.

It also doesn't spell out the long-term goal of the accord — whether it is to remove carbon emissions from the economy altogether or just reduce them. Nor does it settle whether governments will aim to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C (2.7 degrees F) above pre-industrial times or closer to 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F). "It is not bold enough," European Climate Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete said of the draft.

In an attempt to bridge the rich-poor divide that has often stalled progress in the U.N. talks, the foreign minister of the Marshall Islands, Tony de Brum, announced a "high-ambition coalition" including small island nations, the European Union and the United States, among others.

It was not immediately clear whether the move would yield a breakthrough in the talks. At a plenary session in the evening, several developing countries, including India and Malaysia, accused wealthy nations of not living up to their commitments to provide climate aid for the poor. □



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry delivers his speech during a news conference at the COP21 Climate Conference in Le Bourget, north of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 9 2015. Kerry announced that the United States will double its commitment to helping vulnerable nations adapt to climate change impacts such as increased extreme weather events.

(Stephane Mahe, Pool via AP)



German Chancellor Angela Merkel is featured as Time's Person of the Year. The magazine praises her leadership on everything from Syrian refugees to the Greek debt crisis.

(Time Magazine via AP)

German leader Angela Merkel named Time Person of the Year

HILLEL ITALIE

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — German

Chancellor Angela Merkel has been named Time's Person of the Year, praised Wednesday by the magazine for her leadership on everything from Syrian refugees to the Greek debt crisis.

Time also cited Merkel's strong response to "Vladimir Putin's creeping theft of Ukraine" and on its cover called her "Chancellor of the Free World."

"Not once or twice but three times there has been reason to wonder this year whether Europe could continue to exist, not culturally or geographically but as a historic experiment in ambitious statecraft," Time editor Nancy Gibbs wrote. "You can agree with her or not, but she is not taking the easy road. Leaders are tested only when people don't want to follow. For asking more of her country than most politicians would dare, for standing firm against tyranny as well as expedience and for providing steadfast mor-

al leadership in a world where it is in short supply, Angela Merkel is TIME's Person of the Year."

Merkel, 61, is just the fourth woman since 1927 to be chosen and the first since opposition leader Corazon C. Aquino of the Philippines in 1986. She is the first German since Willy Brandt, the West German chancellor named in 1970 for "seeking to bring about a fresh relationship between East and West" during the Cold War. In 1999, Time picked the German-born Albert Einstein as Person of the Century.

Wednesday's news came in as Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert was leading a government press conference in the German capital, while Merkel herself was at an event in Leipzig. When asked about it by The Associated Press, Seibert said he had only just received word on his phone himself.

"I'm sure the chancellor will regard this as an encouragement for her political work, for a good future for Germany as well as for Europe," Seibert said. □

Israel's Netanyahu rejects Trump comments on Muslims

IAN DEITCH
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's prime minister on Wednesday rejected Donald Trump's recent statements about Muslims, saying Israel "respects all religions" as he faced calls to call off an upcoming visit by the Republican front-runner.

Benjamin Netanyahu issued his statement late Wednesday, hours after it was announced that Trump will be visiting Israel at the end of the month. "The state of Israel respects all religions and strictly guarantees the rights of all its citizens," the statement said. "At the

same time, Israel is fighting against militant Islam that targets Muslims, Christians and Jews alike and threatens the entire world." Netanyahu said the meeting with Trump, set for Dec. 28, was scheduled two weeks ago. He said he meets all presidential candidates who visit the coun-

try, and the meeting does not represent an endorsement of Trump. Trump sparked widespread outrage this week after he proposed temporarily banning all Muslims from entering the United States in the wake of a mass shooting by a husband-and-wife pair of

Islamic militants that killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California. Members of Israel's opposition condemned the visit. Israel Radio reported that Arab parliamentarian Issawi Frej of the dovish Meretz party has asked the interior minister not to let Trump in the country. □

Middle East grows wary of Trump, despite ventures in region

JON GAMBRELL
ADAM SCHRECK
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Donald Trump's call to keep Muslims from traveling to the United States is causing dismay among business leaders in the Middle East, a region where the billionaire presidential candidate has done business for years, viewed as well-suited for his brand of over-the-top luxury. Emirati business magnate Khalaf al-Habtoor only months ago proclaimed his support for the Republican hopeful, but that's all changed in the wake of Trump's increasingly incendiary comments about Islam.

"If he comes to my office, I will not let him in. I reject him," al-Habtoor told The Associated Press. "Maybe we can meet somewhere where I can debate with him in a very civilized way, not in the way he approaches people."

Meanwhile, a Mideast company, the Dubai-based Landmark Group, said it would pull all Trump home decor products at



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump poses for a portrait after an interview with The Associated Press in Sterling, Va. Trump's call to keep Muslims from traveling to the United States is causing dismay among business leaders in the Middle East. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

its 180 Lifestyle stores in the region as it "values and respects the sentiments of its customers." Trump has for years looked to do business in the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf and the emirate of Dubai. Trump has lent his name to two high-profile Dubai golf course projects and an ongoing real estate development, and sought for years to expand his hotel chain into the region.

But some of his rhetoric about Islam on the campaign trail — including his call to monitor mosques and his proposal this week to temporarily bar Muslims from traveling to the U.S. — has led to increased wariness in the Arab world. Trump's campaign did not respond to questions about his reputation and business dealings in the Middle East. In a column published Aug. 9 in the state-owned

The National newspaper of Abu Dhabi, al-Habtoor praised Trump for believing "in bringing back his country's superpower status." But late last month, al-Habtoor wrote a follow-up column on Trump that began with: "I was wrong and I do not mind admitting it." "When strength is partnered with ignorance and deceit, it produces a toxic mix threatening the United States and our world," he

wrote, ending his column by endorsing Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton. In a way, Trump's oversized personality, on display for years in syndication on Arab satellite networks, matches the aspirations of the construction boom in the oil-rich Gulf. Star-studded galas in 2008 heralded the launch of the planned Trump International Hotel and Tower Dubai. The 62-story skyscraper of glass and stainless steel would have towered over the man-made Palm Jumeirah island jutting into the Persian Gulf. A construction company al-Habtoor was involved in, Habtoor Leighton Group, was part of a joint venture awarded a 2.9 billion dirham (\$790 million) construction contract for the project in 2008. Dubai's property bubble burst before the project could really get off the ground, and in 2011 The National reported that debt-laden developer Nakheel had canceled the project altogether. Nakheel says it no longer has any business association with Trump. □

British official: No plans to ban Trump over Muslim remarks

JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain has no plans to ban Donald Trump over his comments about Muslims despite a growing number of calls for his exclusion, the country's Treasury chief said Wednesday. British politicians have condemned Trump's proposal for all Muslims to be barred from entering the U.S. in the wake of violence by

Islamic extremists, and official bodies in Britain distanced themselves from the Republican presidential nomination hopeful. A university revoked his honorary degree Wednesday, and the Scottish government dumped Trump as an unpaid business ambassador. Some Britons say the remarks amount to hate speech and have called for Trump to be barred

from the U.K., where he owns a Scottish golf course. An online petition has surpassed the 100,000-signature threshold that means a committee of lawmakers must consider it for debate in Parliament. Finance minister George Osborne told lawmakers that Trump's "nonsense" views "fly in the face of the founding principles of the United States." But he said it would be wrong to "ban

presidential candidates." Answering questions in the House of Commons, Osborne said "the best way to confront the views of someone like Donald Trump is to engage in a robust democratic argument with him about why he is profoundly wrong." The government has the power to bar people considered a threat to public safety or national security, or those with criminal con-

victions. In the past the U.K. has denied entry to figures as diverse as boxer Mike Tyson, rapper Tyler the Creator, radical Muslim preachers and the late Christian fundamentalist Fred Phelps. Sr. Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, in northeast Scotland, said Wednesday it was withdrawing an honorary doctorate in business administration it awarded Trump in 2010. □

FBI: California shooters radicalized at least 2 years ago



FBI Director James Comey testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Comey said the two San Bernardino shooters were radicalized at least two years ago and had discussed jihad and martyrdom as early as 2013.

(AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

**ERIC TUCKER
ASIF SHAHZAD**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The two San Bernardino shooters were radicalized at least two years ago — well before one of them came to the U.S. on a fiancée visa — and had discussed jihad and martyrdom as early as 2013, FBI Director James Comey said Wednesday in providing the most specific details to date about the

couple's path toward extremism.

Investigators now believe that Syed Rizwan Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, embraced radical Islamic ideology even before they had begun their online relationship and that Malik held extremist views before she arrived in the U.S. last year.

Though the FBI believes the pair was inspired in part by Islamic State ideology —

Malik pledged allegiance to the group's leader in a Facebook post around the time of last week's massacre — agents are still looking for other motivations and sources of radicalization, especially because the couple's interest in extremism predates the terror group's emergence as a household name, Comey told the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"ISIL inspiration may well

have been part of this, but these two killers were starting to radicalize towards martyrdom and jihad as early as 2013," said the FBI director, using an acronym for the Islamic State. "And so that's really before ISIL became the global jihad leader that it is."

The latest disclosure also suggests that the government's vetting process failed to detect Malik's radicalization when she applied for the visa, though Comey said he didn't know enough to say whether weaknesses in the visa process enabled her to enter the U.S.

"After this hearing today, every American will be asking the question, how did this woman come in on a fiancée visa?" said Sen. Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat and member of the committee.

Malik came to the United States in July 2014 from Pakistan after being approved for a K-1, or fiancée visa, and married Farook the following month. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson has said the Obama administration is now reviewing the program. He did not say what changes were being con-

sidered.

Malik's father, reached in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, condemned his daughter's actions and said he is "very, very sad... I am in such pain that I cannot even describe it."

The father, Gulzar Ahmed Malik, has been a resident in the kingdom since the early 1980s, the Saudi Interior Ministry says. His daughter was from Pakistan but traveled to Saudi Arabia. A former classmate, Afsheen Butt, said Malik showed drastic changes after a trip to Saudi Arabia in late 2008 or early 2009.

Comey described the couple as an example of home-grown violent extremists who appear to have radicalized "in place," drawing a distinction between the San Bernardino attack and the one last month in Paris that officials suspect involved planning and training in Syria.

The FBI has revealed little else of what it's learned about Farook and Malik and their planning, except for details about the weaponry they had, materials they had to make more pipe bombs and that both had been taking target practice. □

Defense secretary: US ready to do more to help retake Ramadi

**DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Wednesday the U.S. is willing to assist the Iraqi army with more personnel and attack helicopters to help it fight Islamic State militants, especially in the battle to retake a key city in Iraq.

In recent days, Iraqi forces advanced on Ramadi, the provincial capital of Anbar province, retaking a military operations center and a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city. IS fighters captured Ramadi in May in a major setback for Iraqi troops.

"The United States is prepared to assist the Iraqi army with additional unique capabilities to help them finish the job, includ-

ing attack helicopters and accompanying advisers" if circumstances dictate the extra assistance and if

requested by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, Carter said.

Carter outlined the steps



Defense Secretary Ash Carter, center, followed by Joints Chiefs Vice Chairman Gen. Paul Selva, are greeted on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., left, and the committee's ranking member Jack Reed, D-R.I., right, prior to testifying before the committee's hearing.

(AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

as the administration faces criticism from Congress about its strategy to defeat the IS militants, reflecting a nation's growing fears about the threat of terrorism.

Carter said that during the past several months, the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS in Iraq and Syria has provided specialized training and equipment, including combat engineering assistance such as bulldozing, and munitions such as AT-4 shoulder-fired missiles to stop truck bombs, to the Iraqi army and counter-terrorism service units entering Ramadi neighborhoods from multiple directions.

He predicted tough fighting ahead, but said Iraqi forces have shown resilience when faced with counter-attacks from IS.

It was the first time that Carter has testified before the committee since IS claimed responsibility for bombing a Russian airliner and attacks in Beirut and Paris and the deadly attack in San Bernardino, California, by a self-radicalized couple.

Sen. John McCain, the Republican chairman of the committee, advocated for more U.S. troops to be sent to stem IS momentum. "There are 20,000 to 30,000 of them. They are not giants. Somebody is going to have to convince me that air power alone" is going to do the job, McCain said.

Carter defended the Obama administration's decision to not deploy a heavy U.S. ground force to drive IS from Syrian and Iraqi territory. □

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Chicago mayor apologizes for 2014 shooting, vows reforms

DON BABWIN
Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel apologized for the 2014 shooting of a black teenager Wednesday during a special City Council meeting and promised a “complete and total” reform to restore trust in the police. But his emotional speech didn’t stop hundreds of people from taking part in a midday protest downtown, chanting “16 shots and a cover-up” in reference to the release of a video showing white Officer Jason Van Dyke shooting 17-year-old Laquan McDonald, who appeared in the footage to be walking away. Van Dyke is charged with first-degree murder. Emanuel, a former top aide in the Obama administration, criticized the police department for being quick to shoot, saying the department’s “supervision and leadership” had failed. The problems have led to intervention by the U.S. Department of Justice, which announced a far-reaching civil rights investigation of the department this week. “I take responsibility for what happened because

it happened on my watch. And if we’re going to fix it I want you to understand it’s my responsibility with you,” Emanuel said. “But if we’re also going to begin the healing process, the first step in that journey is my step. “And I’m sorry.” His voice cracked as he spoke about families who have lost children to the city’s violence. The McDonald footage — ordered to be released by a judge last month and made public hours after Van Dyke was charged — set off a chain of events that captured the attention of the country. Days of protests and marches followed, including one on the busiest shopping day of the year that partially shut down the city’s most famous shopping district, Michigan Avenue. A few days later, Emanuel announced that he had demanded and received the resignation of Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy, created a new task force for police accountability and expanded the use of body cameras. But the anger did not subside, and every day there



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel speaks during a special City Council meeting that he called to discuss a police abuse scandal Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, in Chicago. Emanuel apologized for the 2014 shooting of a black teenager Wednesday during the special City Council meeting and promised “complete and total” reform to restore trust in the police.

(AP Photo/Paul Beaty)

seemed to be another issue, including the release of hundreds of pages of documents that show police had described in their reports a far more threatening McDonald than the teen shown to the city and the world on video. The situation became so volatile that Emanuel was forced to do something he rarely does: backtrack. After initially saying that a

federal probe of the department would be “misguided” because the U.S. Attorney’s office was already examining the McDonald shooting, Emanuel later said he welcomed such an investigation. On Monday, U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced a Justice Department civil rights investigation to determine if there are patterns of racial dis-

parity in the police department’s use of force. Emanuel then said the city would stop fighting the release of a second video that showed a police officer shooting a man in the back. That video was released Monday during a presentation in which Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez said she would not charge the officer. □

Planned Parenthood suspect: ‘I am warrior for the babies’

SADIE GURMAN
Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado (AP) — The man accused of killing three people and wounding nine others at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado stunned a courtroom Wednesday by declaring he is a “warrior for the babies” and won’t go to trial. Robert Lewis Dear, 57, made the outburst before he was formally charged

with first-degree murder and other counts in a Colorado Springs courtroom. Police have declined to discuss a potential motive in the Nov. 27 attack, but there had been mounting evidence to suggest Dear was deeply concerned about abortion. He rambled to authorities about “no more baby parts” after his arrest. And a law enforcement official said this week that the gun-

man asked at least one person in a nearby shopping center for directions to the clinic before opening fire. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss the investigation and spoke this week to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. Dear has lived in remote locations without electricity or water and was known to hold survivalist ideas.

One of his three ex-wives, Barbara Mescher Micheau of South Carolina said he vandalized a South Carolina abortion clinic at least 20 years earlier, announcing to her that he had put glue in the locks of its doors, a common protest technique among activists trying to shut down abortion clinics. A first-degree murder conviction can lead to life in prison or the death penalty.

Killed in the attack were Garrett Swasey, 44, a University of Colorado-Corona Springs officer who rushed to the scene; Ke’Arre Stewart, 29, an Iraq war veteran who was accompanying someone at the clinic; and Jennifer Markovsky, 35, who also accompanied a friend at the clinic. Five other officers were shot and wounded in the rampage. □

Clinton: Republican candidates hindering anti-terror efforts

LISA LERER

Associated Press

WATERLOO, Iowa (AP) —

Hillary Clinton accused Republicans of undermining American efforts to fight Islamic terrorism, saying Wednesday that the "hateful" campaign rhetoric of Donald Trump and the rest of the Republican field is providing new material for Islamic State propaganda.

"Instead of showing leadership some of the leaders in this campaign are resorting to really hateful rhetoric," Clinton said at a town hall meeting. "Donald Trump, he does traffic in prejudice and paranoia. It's not only shameful, it's dangerous."

Clinton, a former secretary of state, is the overwhelming favorite against two rivals for the Democratic nomination with less than two months to go before the state-by-state primary contests begin. In contrast, the Republican Party is in disarray over Trump's unexpected rise as the staying



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks during a town hall meeting, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, in Waterloo, Iowa. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall)

power at the head of the polls.

Trump's proposal to block Muslims from entering the U.S. has prompted widespread condemnation from lawmakers of both parties and from leaders across the globe.

While Trump's Republican

rivals use what Clinton calls "veiled language" to talk about their plans, Clinton noted that their remarks are also undermining efforts of US negotiators to build a global coalition against the group.

Neurosurgeon Ben Carson has questioned whether a

Muslim-American could be president and both former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz have floated the idea of a religious test for Syrian refugees fleeing violence in the Middle East.

"That runs counter from what I and others who've

actually been in the situation room know we have to do," said Clinton. "We have to enlist help from American Muslims around the work in defeating the radical jihadist and the hateful ideology they represent."

Trump fired back, singling out Clinton as his top competitor during a television appearance Wednesday morning.

"She doesn't have the strength or the stamina," he said on ABC's "Kelly and Michael" program. "I mean, you know, she's got a name and people will stupidly vote for her."

Clinton is spending the day campaigning in Iowa, where she's promoting plans to stop corporate inversions, a practice that permits U.S. companies to merge with corporations overseas to lower their tax bill. Experts say US companies are hoarding roughly \$2 trillion in profits abroad to reduce their taxes.

Though her mention of Trump's name drew boos from the largely elderly crowd, the audience did not raise the issue of terrorism or the conflict in the Middle East. Instead, questioners focused largely on domestic issues, like climate change, health care and childcare costs — a reflection of the economic concerns that remain central in the Democratic primary battle.

"If you become successful in America," said Clinton, "you should pay what you owe just like everybody else."

She added: "This is not only about fairness, this is about patriotism." □

Alabama

Islamic leader notifies FBI of social media contacts

JAY REEVES

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama

(AP) — A Muslim leader in Alabama said Wednesday he had notified the FBI after mosque members received suspicious contacts on social media, including one that mentioned war.

Ashfaq Taufique, president of the Birmingham Islamic Society, said several members of the mosque received friend requests from an unknown person

about 1½ weeks ago. One member also got a message, apparently from the same person, stating: "We are at war and we must stick together," according to Taufique.

Taufique said the meaning of the message was unclear. But the society member informed Taufique, who said he went to the FBI since the message could be tied to extremism amid a time of extremist violence.

"Because of the special time we are in we didn't want to take a chance," said Taufique, adding it was part of his religious duty to report anything that could endanger the community.

Paul Daymond, an FBI spokesman in Birmingham, declined to comment.

Taufique said the friend requests and message were sent before the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, that is being

blamed on a radicalized Muslim couple.

Earlier this year, members of the Birmingham Islamic community were encouraged to report any suspicious activities or signs of possible radicalization after a Muslim teenager from suburban Birmingham left the United States to join Islamic State. Leaders at the time said the young woman apparently was radicalized through online contacts. □

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Consumer credit rises \$16B in U.S. through October

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

U.S. consumers borrowed more heavily for auto and student loans in October, taking out debt that helps them find jobs and commute to work.

The Federal Reserve said this week that consumer borrowing rose \$16 billion in October to \$3.5 trillion. But the pace of borrowing decelerated sharply from the \$28.5 billion increase in September.

Nearly all of the October gain came from the category that covers auto and student loans, while credit card borrowing edged up a mere \$200 million. The increase suggests that more Americans are borrowing to improve their educational skills and upgrade their cars and trucks, instead of relying on debt to fund their daily shopping and emergency expenses.

Many economists expect that consumer spending will be relatively healthy in the coming months because of strong job gains that have bolstered auto and home sales for much of 2015. Yet a struggling global economy has tempered U.S. growth as the year draws to an end.

The Labor Department reported last week that employers added 211,000 jobs in November and 298,000 in October. The unemployment rate held steady at 5 percent last month. The report showed evidence that workers pushed to the sidelines during the Great Recession and sluggish six-year recovery are filtering back into the job market. □

US Financial Front:

More than half of US renters older than 40; study



A rental sign is seen outside a property in Denver. The majority of U.S. renters are now older than 40, a fundamental shift over the past decade that reflects the lasting damage of the housing crash and an aging population, a study said Wednesday, Dec. 9.

(AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

The majority of U.S. renters are now older than 40, a fundamental shift over the past decade that reflects the lasting damage of the housing crash and an aging population.

This finding in a report released Wednesday by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies overturns the assumption that the rental boom is only the result of twenty-somethings flocking to hip urban centers. Single-family houses are a growing share of rentals. And affordability problems are mounting as rents rise faster than wages, while apartment construction increasingly targets tenants with six-figure incomes.

Nearly 51 percent of renters have celebrated their 40th birthday, according to the report's analysis of

Census Bureau data. That amounts to 22.4 million households.

A decade ago when the housing bubble peaked in 2005, 47 percent of renters — or 16.4 million households — were older than 40. Their share was 43 percent in 1995.

The increase in older renters corresponds with a surge in foreclosures after the housing bubble popped. Since the 2008 financial triggered by the housing bust, there have been roughly 6 million completed foreclosures, according to CoreLogic, a property data firm.

Many of these are former owners transitioned to renting.

"Middle-aged households in particular bore a big brunt of the housing crash," said Christopher Herbert, managing director of Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

But Herbert also noted that

more of the baby boomers born after World War II are growing older, which has also caused sharp increases in the number of renters between the ages of 55 and 69 during the past 10 years. During that same period, the United States has added a total of 9 million renters — including younger millennials recent out of college. But demand has outpaced supply and caused prices to rise.

Rents increased 7 percent between 2001 and 2014 after adjusting for inflation, while incomes fell 9 percent, the report said. The result is that a larger number of Americans must devote more than 30 percent of their income to rent, a level that the government considers to be financially burdensome. Over the past decade, that number has jumped from 14.8 million to 21.3 million, or 49 percent of all

renters.

The share of renters being financially burdened has dropped from their 2011 peak, but their total numbers continue to climb.

Construction has done little to ease the problem. Permitting for multifamily construction has increased a robust 17 percent this year.

But the median rent on a newly built apartment was \$1,372 a month in 2014, about \$500 more a month than

what about half of renters could afford without being financially burdened. Much of the apartment construction has catered to wealthier households looking to live near restaurants, parks, gyms and offices. The number of rental households earning in excess of \$100,000 has risen by 1.6 million in previous decade.

Even people with decent incomes between \$30,000 and \$44,999 can't keep up with the rent in the wealthiest markets. More than 70 percent of renters at this income level are classified as financially burdened in Washington, DC, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City and Miami. "We've gotten ourselves into a deep hole — and it's not going to be easy to get out of it," Herbert said. "We expect the affordability problem will persist." □

Iraqis eye next steps in Ramadi as IS claims bombing

**QASSIM ZAHRA
SUSANNAH GEORGE**

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi forces were preparing to push further into the center of the Islamic State-held

tacked a Shiite mosque, killing at least 11 people and wounding 20 Wednesday, an assault that was promptly claimed by IS. Interior Ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Saad Maan said

Press on Wednesday the neighborhood is the backbone of the IS group's structure in Ramadi. The troops' advances on Tuesday were the most significant incursion into

reporters Wednesday from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The fall of Ramadi was the biggest blow to Iraqi forces since IS captured Iraq's second largest city of Mosul in the summer of 2014. The government announced a counteroffensive shortly after Ramadi's fall, but progress has been sluggish.

McGurk cautioned that further advances may also be slow going. "These things take time, Ramadi is a very difficult environment," he said, adding that it took U.S. forces six months to "take and stabilize Ramadi" from al-Qaida, the Islamic State's precursor.

"Daesh is now resorting to holding the center of the city while taking human shields as hostages," McGurk added, referring to IS by its Arabic language acronym.

Ramadi residents have reported that IS controlled checkpoints in the city have prevented many from fleeing. Estimates of civilians remaining in the city range anywhere from 4,000 to 10,000.

Al-Mahlawi, the Iraqi commander in Anbar, said coalition and Iraqi aircraft contributed significantly to the operation, opening "the way before we sent combat units in." The warplanes "inflicted heavy losses on" IS militants, destroying both "equipment and their spirits."

Muhannad Haimour, the spokesman for the Anbar governor's office, said he's receiving reports that the IS organization inside Ramadi is collapsing. □



Iraqi security forces take combat positions at the front-line with Islamic State group militants as Iraqi Army and allied Sunni volunteer tribal fighters supported by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes on Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's Anbar province, 70 miles west of Baghdad, Iraq.

(AP Photo/Osama Sami)

city of Ramadi as the Sunni militant group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Baghdad that killed 11 people on Wednesday.

Backed by U.S.-led airstrikes, the Iraqi troops have struggled to roll back Islamic State gains since the militants seized large swaths of the country's north and west, along with territories in neighboring Syria, in the summer of 2014.

Progress in Iraq's vast Anbar province, west of Baghdad, has been particularly slow, but on Tuesday, Iraqi forces seized an IS operations center and the strategic Tamim neighborhood on the outskirts of the city. In Baghdad, meanwhile, a suicide bomber at-

the attacker detonated his bomb in the mosque doorway as worshippers were leaving after midday prayers.

The IS' claim came in a statement circulated online by its supporters. It bore the group's logo and resembled previous claims issued by the extremists. IS has repeatedly targeted Iraq's Shiite majority, who the Sunni extremists view as apostates.

In Anbar, Maj. Gen. Ismail al-Mahlawi, the head of Iraqi military operations in the province, said his troops were readying to push "toward the government complex and the Houz area" in central Ramadi.

He told The Associated

Ramadi since the city fell to IS in May. There largest obstacle going forward is crossing the Euphrates River north of the city and its Warar tributary to the west. Since overrunning Ramadi, the Islamic State group has destroyed all the bridges around the city. It also demolished the Anbar operations command and fanned out into the city's residential areas to set up less conspicuous centers of command.

"When Ramadi fell in May, it was the last time we saw Daesh take offensive action here in Iraq in any sort of concerted way," said Brett McGurk, the official in charge of the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State group, speaking to

Turkey defends additional troops deployed in Iraq

**AYSE WIETING
SUZAN FRASER**

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey's prime minister on Wednesday defended the country's deployment of additional forces to Iraq last week, saying it was an "act of solidarity" with Iraq's fight against the Islamic State group.

Turkey has stationed troops at a base outside Mosul since last year as part of a training mission coordinated with the Iraqi government in Baghdad. The arrival of additional Turkish forces last week, however, sparked uproar in the Iraqi capital.

Iraqi officials gave Turkey a 48-hour deadline to withdraw additional troops and Turkey declared it had halted the new deployment. Iraq's U.N. Ambassador Mohamed Alhakim told reporters in New York on Tuesday that Baghdad and Ankara were working to solve the dispute bilaterally and "I think it's going very well." Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told a group of foreign reporters in Istanbul on Wednesday that the additional troops were sent to protect the trainers amid an increased threat from the Islamic State group.

"This is not an act of aggression but an act of solidarity," Davutoglu said. "Our intention is to protect these trainers." Asked about Baghdad's request to withdraw the troops, Davutoglu said: "When we saw the reaction we stopped the transfer. but we cannot leave these trainers without protection." On Wednesday, Turkey issued a warning advising its citizens to avoid unnecessary travel to or within Iraq and urging vigilance. It cited increased threats to Turkish interests in the country. The warning, however, didn't comprise regions within the Kurdish Regional Government. Earlier, the Turkish military said it has carried out aerial raids on suspected Kurdish rebel sites in a new cross-border offensive in northern Iraq. □

Police: Palestinian killed after stabbing 2 Israelis

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian stabbed and seriously wounded two Israelis in the West Bank on Wednesday before he was shot and killed by Israeli security forces at the scene, police said.

The incident occurred near the city of Hebron, a frequent flashpoint for violence. Many of the Palestinians involved in recent

stabbings have come from there. Tensions are high in the city where about 850 Israeli settlers live in heavily-guarded enclaves surrounded by tens of thousands of Palestinians. Much of the animosity is over a key holy site, sacred to both Jews and Muslims.

Later Wednesday, the military said two Israelis were wounded when a passing

car opened fire on them in the West Bank. The military said forces were searching the area for the assailant. Wednesday's incidents were the latest in a three month-long outburst of Israeli-Palestinian violence that has shown no signs of relenting.

Since mid-September, 19 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks. At least

109 Palestinians have died in the latest violence, including 74 said by Israel to be attackers. The remainder died in clashes with security forces. Israel says the violence is fanned by a Palestinian campaign of lies and incitement. The Palestinians say it is the result of frustrations stemming from Israel's nearly 50-year occupation. □



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Text to mom announcing death identifies 3rd Bataclan attacker

LORI HINNANT
NICOLAS MONTAGNY
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — It took a text message from Syria to a mother in northeast France to reveal the identity of the third killer at the Bataclan concert venue in Paris: Your son died as a martyr Nov. 13.

For nearly four weeks, police had failed to identify the third gunman who stormed the concert venue along with two French Islamic extremists, killing nearly three-quarters of the total 130 people who died in the Paris attacks.

Then, about 10 days ago, Foued Mohamed-Aggad's mother in Strasbourg received a text message in English announcing her son's death "as a martyr" — a typical way that the Islamic State group notifies families of casualties. She gave French police a DNA sample which showed that one of her sons was killed inside the Bataclan, his brother's lawyer said, confirming an account by French officials, who requested anonymity to release details of the investigation.

"Without the mother, there would have been nothing," said the lawyer, Francoise Cotta.

The news announced Wednesday further confirms that the deadly Paris attacks were carried out largely, if not entirely, by Europeans trained by Islamic State extremists.

All the Nov. 13 attackers identified so far have been from France or Belgium, native French speakers who wanted to join IS extremists. The Bataclan attackers, who carried automatic weapons and wore suicide vests, were responsible for the worst of the carnage.

Mohamed-Aggad left Strasbourg for Syria in December 2013, a French judicial official said, at a time when about a dozen young men from the eastern French city headed to the war zone. Some returned of their own will — including his brother — telling investigators they were disgusted by what they had seen. Their suspected recruiter for IS, Mourad Fares, is also under arrest in France. All are charged with terror-related offenses and face trial.

Cotta said Mohamed-Aggad had told his family months ago that he was going to be a suicide bomber in Iraq and had no intention of returning to France. She told The Associated Press that Mohamed-Aggad was flagged as a radical but there was no warrant for his arrest. The other two Bataclan attackers, Omar Ismail Mostefai and Samy Amimour, were also French. Two of the three gunmen detonated their explosives when police special forces moved in, while the third was shot by an officer and his explosives went off.

French-speaking Islamic State fighters, primarily from France and Belgium, tend to live and fight together. Mohamed-Aggad's arrival in Syria coincides approximately with that of the two men who died with him inside the Bataclan, and with that of the suspected architect of the attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was widely believed to be a leader of the franco-phone combat unit. □



A refugee family passes beside Greek riot police officers at a refugee camp near Idomeni railway station in northern Greece by the border with Macedonia, photographed from the Macedonian side of the border, near the town of Gevgelija, on Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015. Greek riot police have removed Wednesday hundreds of protesting migrants from a border crossing to Macedonia, which is denying them entry, deeming them to be economic migrants and not refugees.

(AP Photo/Boris Grdanoski)

At least 12 dead in Aegean boat sinking

COSTAS KANTOURIS
Associated Press

IDOMENI, Greece (AP)

— A wooden smuggling boat carrying about 50 people sank Wednesday in the eastern Aegean Sea. Greek authorities said at least 12 people drowned, including six children, and 12 others were missing.

In northern Greece, riot police removed more than 2,000 migrants who had been protesting for weeks at a border crossing with Macedonia, which is denying them entry. Greek coast guard and navy vessels, a helicopter and a vessel from the European border agency Frontex were searching for survivors off the Greek island of Farmakonissi after the boat sank early Wednesday. Authorities said 26 people were rescued. Weather conditions in the area were good but survivors told the coast guard the boat had begun taking on water shortly after setting sail from Turkey. Greece is the main entry point for asylum-seekers trying to get into the 28-na-

tion European Union, and about 770,000 people have arrived so far this year. More than 200 have drowned so far, and at least 120 more are listed as missing.

Few want to remain in financially stricken Greece, with almost all heading to the border with Macedonia then through the Balkans to more prosperous European nations.

Some Balkan countries, however, have stopped allowing anyone except those from war-torn countries to cross their borders, considering the rest not refugees in danger but economic migrants who just want better jobs. Macedonia is allowing only people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq to cross in, leaving thousands of others stranded on the Greek side of the border. Migrants have protested the new restrictions and sometimes the demonstrations at the Idomeni border crossing have turned violent. The unrest has severed a key Greek freight train link with northern Europe for three

weeks and also periodically prevented refugees that Macedonia will accept from crossing the border. About 350 Greek police launched an operation just after dawn Wednesday to clear the migrants — many of them from Iran, Morocco and Pakistan — from the border area. Escorted by police motorcyclists and patrol cars, 45 buses carrying about 2,300 people headed south from Idomeni to Athens, where authorities set up shelters and will encourage the migrants to make asylum applications in Greece. A member of the Doctors of the World charity at the border said there were few tensions Wednesday between police and migrants. "Things were generally calm, because the migrants didn't react," surgeon Vassilis Naoum said. "In some cases where they did, I saw them being detained ... this happened to at least 30 people." Police said 10 migrants were detained for resisting a transfer to the buses. □

Mexican health authorities approves first dengue vaccine

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexican health authorities approved the first vaccine to gain official acceptance for use against the dengue virus, which sickens about 100 million people every year, mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mexico's federal medical safety agency said Wednesday the vaccine has undergone testing on over 40,000 patients worldwide. It said Wednesday

the vaccine's manufacturer had proved its safety and effectiveness, but did not name the drug. In a separate statement, the Lyon, France-based Sanofi Pasteur identified the vaccine as Dengvaxia. Mexico said the vaccine is aimed at people aged 9 to 45, and will be used in areas where the disease is endemic. According to a World Health Organization report published in late

2014, the vaccine had an average rate of effectiveness of about 60.8 percent in protecting against the four strains of dengue currently circulating. But it appeared to be particularly effective in protecting people who had already been exposed to one of the four strains from catching another strain. That is important because experts believe the most extreme, potentially

life-threatening form of the disease — known as dengue hemorrhagic fever, which can cause internal bleeding, shock, organ failure and death — may hit people who have already had one strain, and then suffer a subsequent infection by a different strain. Because of that, Mexico said it planned to apply the vaccine in areas where exposure rates to at least one strain

were 60 percent or more. The federal agency, known by its initials as Cofepris, said the vaccine could help prevent 104 deaths, 8,000 hospital admissions and save about \$65 million in health expenditures annually. Mosquitoes transmit the dengue virus. Symptoms include high fevers and severe muscle and joint pain. There's no specific treatment for dengue. □

Australia police raid home of man said to be bitcoin founder



A Federal police officer walks through the garage at the home of a Sydney man in Sydney, Australia, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015 as they search the property as part of a tax investigation. Technology news sites have alleged the man is the creator of the virtual currency Bitcoin.

(AP Photo/Rob Griffith)

KRISTEN GELINEAU
Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Australian police on Wednesday raided the home and business premises of a man that technology news sites have

claimed is the founder of virtual currency bitcoin. A statement from the Australian Federal Police said the searches were related to a tax investigation and not recent media reports

on the virtual currency, which is used for transactions across borders without third parties such as banks. Federal officers and tax officials refused to answer questions as they left the

house in a Sydney suburb hauling two black roller suitcases.

Technology publications Wired and Gizmodo published reports this week claiming an Australian businessman is bitcoin's likely inventor.

Since bitcoin's birth in 2009, the identity of currency's creator has remained a mystery. The person, or people, behind the digital currency's inception have been known only as "Satoshi Nakamoto," which many observers believed to be a pseudonym.

In March last year, American Dorian Prentice Satoshi Nakamoto denied in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press that he was the inventor after Newsweek published a 4,500-word cover story linking the currency to him.

Attempts to reach the Sydney businessman that reports claim is Nakamoto were unsuccessful.

A man answered a mobile phone number belonging to the businessman's wife. When an AP journalist

asked if she was speaking with the person named as Nakamoto, he asked who was calling. When told he was speaking to a reporter, the man said, "Sorry. Not here," and hung up. Voice-mails left on the man's mobile and office numbers were not returned.

His LinkedIn profile lists him as working for a Sydney company that focuses on "alternative currency" and "next generation banking." The police search of the man's home in the wealthy northern Sydney suburb of Gordon lasted several hours and drew a steady trickle of perplexed neighbors into the quiet, tree-lined street.

Many described the man as quiet and somewhat standoffish, and said they had noticed the family kept an unusual amount of electronics running in the sunroom at the front of their two-story brick house. None had seen the family on Wednesday; letters overflowed the mailbox and the garbage bins were full. □

Suleiman the Magnificent's tomb believed found in Hungary

Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — The remains of the tomb of Suleiman the Magnificent, who died in 1566 while his troops were besieging the fortress of Szigetvar in southern Hungary, have "in all likelihood" been found, a Hungarian historian said Wednesday. Norbert Pap said the tomb is believed to have been built over the spot where Suleiman's tent

stood and where he died. Pap, head of the department of Political Geography, Regional and Development Studies at the University of Pecs in Hungary, said objects suggesting it was Suleiman's tomb were found during the dig, as well as other historical evidence, although more excavations are needed to confirm the find.

"We have data which all

points in the same direction," Pap said at a presentation of the latest findings. "That is why we say 'in all certainty,' because there is no sign pointing in another direction. But more confirmation is needed, as this is a very delicate topic."

Until his death at age 71, Suleiman was the Ottoman Empire's longest-ruling sultan. The Turks greatly expanded their dominance

in the Balkans, the Middle East and northern Africa during his 46-year reign.

What is believed to be the sultan's tomb is located in the former Ottoman settlement of Turbek, which was destroyed in the 1680s. The settlement's discovery was announced by Pap in 2013. Historians believe Suleiman's heart and internal organs were buried in the tomb and his body taken

back to Constantinople, as Istanbul was then known. His death at Szigetvar was kept secret for 48 days to prevent his troops from giving up the fight. Szigetvar was defended by locals led by Croatian-Hungarian nobleman Miklos Zrinyi. The siege was a pyrrhic victory for the Turks and delayed their ultimately unsuccessful advance toward Vienna for decades. □

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Venezuela President Maduro vows to fight opposition

HANNAH DREIER
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro is promising to protect the country's socialist revolution from what he says are "bad guy" opposition leaders who will take control of Congress next month.

Speaking from the mausoleum of the late President Hugo Chavez Tuesday night, Maduro said he would fight the agenda of opposition leaders who won a landslide victory in Sunday's legislative election.

The embattled socialist president stood directly over the marble sarcophagus where his mentor's body rests, and appealed to Chavez for guidance.

"Oh how we miss you, Commander; your advice and your fighting spirit," he said. "I hope that the historic project you left to Venezuela and the world can continue."

Maduro promised to reject a law backed by opposition leaders that would free imprisoned anti-government activists.

That rejection would be mostly symbolic, because in Venezuela bills can become law even if the president does not approve, so long as the Supreme Court does not find the legislation unconstitutional.

Maduro also pledged to shake up his cabinet in the wake of the opposition's first national victory since Chavez initiated the socialist movement in 1998, and to hold a summit to examine what went wrong in the election in which, he said, "the bad guys won."

A group of justices requested early retirement in the run up to the vote, raising fears that the socialist party would try to pack the court

if the election went against them.

Those justices could in theory reverse any legislation the new National Assembly approves.

On Tuesday, National Assembly president Diosdado Cabello announced that the government would appoint 12 new Supreme Court judges before the opposition leaders are sworn in on Jan. 5.

Cabello also said the National Assembly's television channel would remain in the hands of the station's government workers.

The tiny channel has become a point of contention because the opposition has been almost completely frozen out of the mainstream media here. State television stations, including this one, have become organs of propaganda for the socialist party.

Opposition members now use a YouTube channel to get their announcements out, and have already been eagerly planning



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro gestures to supporters in Caracas, Venezuela. Maduro is promising to protect the country's socialist revolution from opposition leaders who will take control of Congress next month.

(AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

what they will do with the National Assembly channel.

Venezuela has not seen a divided government since Chavez came to power in 1998, and Maduro's re-

marks Tuesday added fuel to fears that the two camps will be unable to share power.

The opposition has said it will use its new legislative power to remove Maduro

from office if he refuses to work together to rescue the country's sinking economy, and even some socialists have called for his resignation in the wake of Sunday's loss. □

Wealthy environmentalist Tompkins dies in Chile accident

EVA VERGARA
Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP)

— Douglas Tompkins, a wealthy U.S. businessman and environmental activist who bought up large swaths of land in South America's Patagonia region with the aim to keep them pristine, has died. He was 72.

Tompkins died Tuesday from severe hypothermia in a kayaking accident in Chile, authorities said.

The Aysen health service said Tompkins, who was a co-founder of The North Face and Esprit clothing companies, was boating with five other foreigners

when their kayaks capsized in a lake in the Patagonia region of southern Chile. Tompkins died in the intensive care unit of the hospital in Coyhaique, a town 1,700 kilometers (1,056 miles) south of Santiago.

"He had lost consciousness and wasn't breathing" when brought to the hospital by helicopter, Dr. Carlos Salazar told local television stations. Chile's army said strong waves on General Carrera Lake caused the group's kayaks to capsize. A military patrol boat rescued three of the boaters and a helicopter lifted out the other three, it said.

After retiring in 1989, Tomp-

kins was active in conservation and environmentalism. He owned hundreds of thousands of hectares (acres) in Patagonia, a sparsely populated region of untamed rivers and other natural beauty that straddles southern Chile and Argentina. On his Chilean land, he created Pumalin Park, 290,000 hectares (716,606 acres) of forest, lakes and fjords stretching from the Andes to the Pacific. "Doug was a passionate advocate for the environment," said The North Face in a statement. "His legacy of conservation will help ensure that there are outdoor spaces to be

explored for generations to come."

Tompkins was one of the founders of The North Face, an activewear company that is now owned by VF Corp. of Greensboro, North Carolina. He also founded, with his wife, the Esprit clothing company.

An active outdoorsman, besides buying up land to preserve it, Tompkins also sometimes got involved in local environmental issues in Chile and Argentina. Many credit him with helping to raise consciousness about the toll that large man-made projects, such as dams, can have on ecosystems. □

A year in: Detente with US reshapes Cuba's psychic landscape

ANDREA RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — An American flag whips in the wind above the reopened U.S. Embassy in Cuba. Many of the thousands of foreign visitors strolling down the cobblestone streets of Old Havana are booking their stays through Airbnb.

At the same time, a surge in Cubans seeking to leave the island before their preferential status for U.S. residency ends has flooded Central America with mi-

the expectations of greater prosperity and new freedoms. For others — the poor, the old, the vast ranks of bureaucrats who've dedicated their lives to the communist system, the dramatic dual presidential announcements of Dec. 17, 2014 and the steps toward normalization have led to feelings of fear.

Cubans with businesses have been buoyed since then by the prospect of better relations. Hotels, private bed-and-breakfasts

and that can open a path to a future of brotherhood and mutual aid," said Fernando Funes, a former government agronomist who runs a 20-acre environmentally friendly farm supplying vegetables such as arugula and chicory to private restaurants in Havana.

Those in favor of the warming in relations are hoping that the anniversary of the presidential announcements will add momentum to negotiations to connect the countries with commer-

borders with Mexico this year. With thousands more sailing across the Florida Straits, 2015 may witness the biggest outflow of Cubans since 125,000 fled during Mariel.

The exodus has prompted a crackdown by Cuba and its regional allies, with Nicaragua closing its border to Cubans last month, and Ecuador suddenly requiring Cubans to get a visa.

A panicked crowd of visa applicants outside the Ecuadoran Embassy launched a rare street protest on Nov. 27, their ire directed at the government. "This is all Raul Castro's fault, no one else's!" shouted Adriel Acosta, a computer scientist. "He's the one who caused this problem!"

Cuba declared Dec. 1 that its medical system was in a critical situation because of a U.S. program that offers special treatment for doctors who want to emigrate. Physicians would now need exit permits to leave the country for any reason. It was a dramatic reversal for a government that two years ago eliminated the permits Cubans once needed to leave their own country.

After Fidel Castro took power in 1959, every aspect of Cuban life was infused with a sense of struggle against the United States, from its art to its medical system to its politics. Government critics were tarred as U.S. agents and dissent was considered an attack on the country.

Elaine Diaz tried to stay loyal to the ideals of the socialist revolution after she graduated from journalism school in 2008 and founded a blog that criticized government mismanagement and inefficiency. Government supporters called her a counterrevolutionary. Critics blasted her as too tame. □



People shop at the El Egidio food market in Havana, Cuba. Cubans with businesses have been buoyed by the prospect of better relations with the U.S. Hotels, private bed-and-breakfasts and elegant restaurants have been packed, with hundreds more expected to open in the coming year.

(AP Photo/Desmond Boylan)

grants in what could be the biggest exodus since the 1980 Mariel boatlift.

In the year since Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama announced a rapprochement between bitter the Cold War enemies, Cuba has been transformed. A country that once seemed stuck in time suddenly faces an uncertain future of disruptive change.

Particularly for those with money, property or connections, the frothy optimism is palpable, as are

and elegant restaurants have been packed, with hundreds more expected to open in the coming year. Pope Francis, who played a critical role in negotiations that led to detente, made a stop in Cuba on his way to the United States in September. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry reopened the embassy in person in August.

"It's a breath of fresh air, knowing that they're filling away the rough edges between the two peoples and their governments,

cial flights and direct mail, perhaps paving the way for a visit by Obama in the first half of next year.

But for others, the changes are happening much too fast.

Many fear normalization will end the guarantee of legal residency that Cubans receive the moment they touch U.S. soil. Roughly 45,000 Cubans are expected to travel by bus, boat, taxi and on foot from Ecuador and other South and Central American countries to the Texas and California

CARIBBEAN News Briefs

Jamaican bringing legal challenge to anti-sodomy laws

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP)

— A Jamaican gay rights activist has brought a rare legal challenge to the Caribbean island's anti-sodomy laws that criminalize sex between men.

Maurice Tomlinson has filed a claim in Jamaica's Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the rarely-used 1864 laws that ban anal sex and anything interpreted as "gross indecency" between men. In a Wednesday statement Tomlinson said the longstanding laws are a "gross violation of my human rights" and those of all LGBT people in Jamaica. Tomlinson is a senior policy analyst at the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. Another Jamaican gay rights activist made headlines in 2013 after initiating a constitutional court challenge to the laws.

But that activist withdrew the case last year because of safety concerns.

Cuba, US start up talks on damages, confiscated lands

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba and the United States have begun trying to resolve billions in dollars in claims for the confiscation of American properties by the island's socialist government.

Cuba in turn is demanding more than \$100 billion in damages for the half-century old U.S. trade embargo on the island. Resolution of the issues is seen as fundamental to the reestablishment of trade between the countries.

A U.S. commission has certified nearly 6,000 claims against Cuba by American and U.S. firms whose property was taken after Cuba's 1959 revolution. The claims are worth as much as \$8 billion. U.S. court rulings against Cuba add another \$2 billion. □

Brazil suspends impeachment commission for 1 week

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's Supreme Court has suspended impeachment proceedings against President Dilma Rousseff for one

week as it decides whether Congress acted correctly in how it formed a commission to deal with the case. Justice Edson Fachin ruled

late Tuesday to suspend the proceedings that gave the opposition more influence on the commission. Pro-Rousseff lawmakers say that

speaker Eduardo Cunha's decision to hold the vote to decide the commission's members in secret was unconstitutional. □



Hilton Aruba Resort & Casino Opens First Smit & Dorlas Coffee Shop



ORANJESTAD –The doors of the newest Smit & Dorlas coffee shop opened on Tuesday morning at the lobby of the Hilton Aruba Resort & Casino. This was a very special moment for both the management of Smit & Dorlas Caribbean N.V., as for the management of the Hilton who wanted to offer their guests the best experience and quality in a coffee shop. From now on all visitors, and locals alike, are within steps of their favorite coffee flavor.

"We are extremely proud with the inauguration of the Smit & Dorlas Coffee Shop here at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino. We wanted to create an atmosphere where all our guests can relax and connect with each other, and the best way to do this is by sharing a good cup of Coffee. We want to thank and say welcome to the entire family of Smit & Dorlas" this is how the General



Manager, Mr. Olivier Maumaire started the inauguration.

The new coffee shop at the Hilton Aruba Resort & Casino is designed with your ultimate comfortable experience in mind. The cozy coffee shop is a "Grab & Go" concept. Original yellow and brown tones from the Smit & Dorlas brand are an essential element in the décor. The

company is proud to thank local company, Sync by Office Systems Aruba, who is responsible for the great work. Just drop in and make a selection from our wide coffee menu, but also savor delicious bagels, wraps, cakes and brownies to get you on your way, either in the morning or as a mid afternoon snack.

Looking for a different kind of snack? The best Italian gelato from Planet Gelatto in nine different flavors will touch your taste.

Smit & Dorlas Caribbean N.V. is well known in the local market for many years as the island's premiere distributor of high quality coffees, iced coffees, frappe's, renowned machinery and personal touch. They are the preferred choice at most hotels, restaurants and companies. □



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ATA Honors Emerald Ambassador at Surfside Marina



ORANJESTAD - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority honored Mr. Donald George Mitchell of Canada as an Emerald Ambassador of Aruba, as a token of appreciation for visiting

the island for 35-or-more consecutive years. Ms. Darline de Cuba representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, Visitors care Liaison, bestowed the certificate to the honoree at

the Surfside Marina on behalf of the Government of Aruba. Ms. De Cuba and representatives from the Surfside Marina thanked Mr. Mitchell for choosing Aruba as his

family's favorite vacation destination and as their 'home-away-from-home' for 41 amazing years. The honored guest stated that the main reasons for returning to Aruba were the

weather, the restaurants, the safety, and most of all, the people. Congratulation Mr. Mitchell you hold a special place in the hearts of Arubans! □

Playa Linda Honors Its Hospitality Professionals



PALM BEACH –In honor of its many, dedicated hospitality professionals, Playa Linda Beach Resort recently hosted a celebratory lunch for those employees completing a milestone work anniversary this year. The festive event, held at Taste of Belgium, provided well-

deserved congratulations to individuals who have made a career at the Playa Linda, and who, in turn, have played an important role in making the resort a top timeshare in Aruba. Among the honorees was Grounds Attendant Gaspar

Subularse, who marked an impressive 20 years with the Playa Linda, as well as Front Office and Reservations Manager Rocheline 'Roosje' Roos and Concierge Yvette Tromp, both with 15 years.

Also receiving praise was Loss Prevention Officer Tito Boekhoudt with 10 years and Relief Engineer Sylvester Celestine with five years. Earlier this year,

an even larger number of milestone anniversaries were celebrated, and among them were employees who have been at the resort almost since it first opened its doors. Honorees included 25-year veterans, Cecilia Charles, Catharina Angela, Amalia Gomez and Monica Liverpool (now retired). Also re-



ceiving special recognition was Maria Teresa Santana and Maureen Wong, each with 20 years of service. Eduard Maduro and Anelies de Cuba, each marked 10 years, and Kenny Haakmeester rounded up the group with five years on the job. It is the invaluable expertise as well as the enduring loyalty and diligence of these individuals, combined with

the efforts of the entire Playa Linda team, that continue to bring accolades for the resort, and constant commentary from guests on the friendliness and excellence of resort staff. Each of this year's special honorees received a souvenir picture frame as well as the customary bonus in appreciation for all their years of outstanding work. □

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Barcelona's Lionel Messi scores the opening goal during the Champions League Group E soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and FC Barcelona in Leverkusen, western Germany, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015. A Barcelona side without many stars played to a 1-1 draw with Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League on Wednesday, sending the German side to the Europa League.

(AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

Barcelona Draws With Leverkusen in Champions League

LEVERKUSEN, Germany (AP) — A Barcelona side without many stars played to a 1-1 draw with Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League on Wednesday, sending the German side to the Europa League. Title holder Barcelona had already qualified and was sure to win Group E. Playing without Neymar, who sustained a groin strain in the final practice on Tuesday, and Luis Suarez, who was

rested, Barcelona still went ahead through captain Lionel Messi — the only one of the three forward stars who started the match. Messi picked up a perfect through ball from Ivan Rakitic to score in the 20th. Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez leveled three minutes later. Barcelona finished with 14 points, ahead of Roma with six. Roma advanced because

of a better head-to-head record over Leverkusen, which also had six points. Roma drew 0-0 with BATE Borisov, which stayed bottom of the group at five points. With nothing to play for, Barcelona coach Luis Enrique did not even bring Andres Iniesta and Gerard Pique to Germany. But Barcelona still took control at the start and Rakitic created the goal

for Messi with a perfectly timed through pass. Messi rounded goalkeeper Bernd Leno and slotted home for his 80th Champions League goal. Leverkusen replied quickly. Admir Mehmedi sent in a low cross from the left and Hernandez fired a first-time shot into the roof of the net. A bad clearance then allowed Hakan Calhanoglu to have a clear shot but he missed the Barcelona net.

Barcelona's German goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen produced two outstanding saves to protect Barcelona's point in the second half. He first foiled Karim Bellarabi and then turned away a late effort by Hernandez with one hand. "All we needed was one more goal so we are very disappointed," Leverkusen's Christoph Kramer said. □

Leicester Column:

At post-Blatter FIFA, can World Cup vote be clean?

JOHN LEICESTER
AP Sports Columnist

PARIS (AP) — Perhaps the only thing scarier than the scale of corruption that U.S. investigators are uncovering in football is the thought that a sizeable chunk of those indicted administrators might soon also have laid paws on the sport's crown jewel, the World Cup.

Back in 2013, it seemed like a smart move when the power to decide where soccer's showcase tournament is played was taken away from Sepp Blatter and the FIFA president's discredited Executive Committee.

Their scandal-tainted selection behind closed doors of not just one but two dubious World Cup hosts — Russia for 2018 and Qatar for 2022 — had caused a reputation-shredding stink for FIFA. So at a May 2013 congress on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, 200 of FIFA's member associations approved by 198 votes to 2 that from now on they would make future World Cup hosting decisions themselves.

A larger electorate, the thinking went, could be harder for World Cup bidders to bribe and otherwise corrupt and influence than the smaller Executive Committee of two dozen members.

So the change seemed like a modest victory for reform, accountability and transparency in an organization that desperately needed industrial-strength doses of all those things. Seemed.

Based on what U.S. justice officials are now turning up, the guardianship of the World Cup still looks far from safe. So far, 16 of FIFA's member associations have been implicated in the ongoing U.S. Department of Justice investigation of decades of soccer bribery and graft, by virtue of the fact that either their presidents or ex-presidents — or both in the cases of Brazil, Honduras and Guatemala — are among those indicted or who have pleaded guilty. Throw in the foot-

ball associations of Argentina and South Africa, also named in DOJ indictments, and the figure rises to 18. That is 18 out of the total of 209 national football associations that are affiliated with FIFA. Or, put another way, approaching 10 percent of the electorate in fu-

openness and a degree of accountability, which at the moment there just isn't."

Wheatland was one of three authors of a Transparency International report last month that found many FIFA associations are shockingly poor at letting

Rescheduling the vote for 2026 will be a job for Blatter's successor, to be elected in February.

If he's smart, the new president will use that ticking clock as leverage: tell all member federations that those which fail to reform, that don't have websites,



A man stands in front of the logo at the FIFA headquarters "Home of FIFA" in Zurich, Switzerland. (Walter Bieri/Keystone via AP)

ture votes to choose World Cup hosts. Although that doesn't necessarily mean that entire associations must be riddled with corruption or that future World Cup votes will be, that so many of them are operating under DOJ clouds is bad for trust, confidence and credibility in the whole system.

So reforms that FIFA is now applying to the way it does business must also go beyond the governing body's headquarters in Zurich. To turn FIFA into something other than a byword for bad management and abuse of power will also require rooting out bad management lower down football's pyramid, among FIFA's membership.

Having one without the other would be like putting lipstick on a pig and won't fool anyone.

"It's not just FIFA," Ben Wheatland of anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International says. "It needs to be on every level. There needs to be that transparency, and the

the outside world know exactly how they account for their revenue and millions of dollars the Zurich HQ gives them to work and grow football. One in five FIFA members don't even have a website, TI found.

"That's the first step on the ladder of being able to hold these people to account," Wheatland notes. "If they don't even have that then they're just not playing ball at all."

Even FIFA recognizes there are problems, telling its 209 member federations in a letter released this week of "major deficiencies" in their handling of tens of millions of dollars in project money this year.

The next vote for a World Cup was expected in May 2017, to choose the host for 2026. But that timing now looks unlikely, thrown off by the U.S. and Swiss corruption probes that have brought down Blatter, who is suspended from FIFA and under investigation by Switzerland's attorney general for suspected criminal mismanagement.

publish full accounts and, for good measure, don't have term limits and integrity checks for their top officials or publish their salaries simply don't deserve to have a hand in picking future World Cup hosts.

After all, if FIFA members can't run themselves properly why should they be trusted at all? Short answer: they shouldn't.

Given that its decision will impact how taxpayers' money is spent in the country selected, the World Cup electorate should be squeaky clean.

So should the vote. That should mean completely open ballots so federations can then be asked afterward to explain why they voted as they did.

There also should be rules to ensure that bidders' spending is transparent, limited and accounted for. "You can't just trust these people to make this decision behind closed doors," Wheatland says. "Even if most of them aren't corrupt, the opportunity for corruption is there." □

Ronaldo staying at Real Madrid, defends Benitez

TALES AZZONI
AP Sports Writer

MADRID (AP) — Cristiano Ronaldo on Tuesday dismissed rumors that he wants to leave Real Madrid and said coach Rafa Benitez is doing a good job at the club.

Ronaldo spoke after scoring four goals in Madrid's 8-0 rout of Malmo, when he became the first player to score 10 goals or more in the group stage of the Champions League. He netted 11 goals in six games, surpassing the nine scored by Luiz Adriano with Shakhtar Donetsk last season. Ronaldo also scored nine times in the 2013-14 season.

The striker says he is happy and will stay with Real Madrid despite widespread reports that he is negotiating a transfer to Paris Saint-Germain.

"It's speculation, it happens every year," Ronaldo said. "People should be used to this by now. But this club has helped me greatly since I've arrived and I'm very happy here."

He said his brief sideline meeting with PSG coach Laurent Blanc during a recent match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium didn't mean anything.

"What happened with Blanc is simple," Ronaldo said. "If somebody treats you well, you talk to that person. If someone from Chelsea, Manchester or Barcelona is nice to me, I'll talk to that person. Obviously, it means nothing. I have a contract with Real Madrid and I will stay."

Ronaldo hadn't talked much publicly since Real Madrid became engulfed in a crisis following a humiliating 4-0 home loss to Barcelona and an embarrassing disqualification in the Copa del Rey because of an ineligible player.

Ronaldo said "it's normal" for a club such as Real Madrid "to be criticized when things go wrong," and expressed his support to coach Benitez, who has been constantly jeered by fans at the Bernabeu. □

Skier Fenninger eyes WCup return at start of 2016-17 season



In this March 2015 photo, Anna Fenninger of Austria competes during the first run of an alpine ski, women's World Cup giant slalom race, at the World Cup finals in Meribel, France. Two-time overall champion Fenninger says Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, she is recovering well from knee surgery and aims to return to the World Cup for the first race of the 2016-17 season.

ERIC WILLEMSSEN
Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Two-time overall champion Anna Fenninger is expecting to return to World Cup skiing for the first race of the 2016-

17 season after a year-long injury layoff.

The Austrian skier was ruled out for up to 12 months after damaging her right knee in a training crash on Oct. 21, three days before

the season-opening giant slalom in Soelden.

"My recovery goes according to plan," Fenninger said on Wednesday, adding she had been walking without crutches for one week. "Today was the first time I woke up and forgot that I am injured. The next couple of months will be very tough but I will keep on fighting. Soelden 2016 is my goal."

The Olympic super-G champion had surgery on the medial collateral and the cruciate ligament as well as the patellar tendon. Austrian team doctor Christian Hoser said after the operation seven weeks ago that Fenninger would need nine to 12 months of recovery before getting back on skis.

Initially "in shock" when doctors informed her on the extent of her injury, Fenninger said she tried to look forward as soon as possible.

"Every day is like strength training. I've lost a lot of muscle mass and need to build it up again," she said at a sponsor event. "To be able to walk without crutches has been the biggest moment during my recovery so far."

The 26-year-old Fenninger won the overall title the past two seasons, and earned gold in super-G and giant slalom at the world championships in Beaver Creek this year. She has won eight medals in total at Olympics and world championships, and has won 14 World Cup races. □

(AP Photo/Shinichiro Tanaka)

AP: Federer, Edberg coaching deal ends, Ivan Ljubicic hired

The Associated Press

Roger Federer says his coaching relationship with his "childhood idol" Stefan Edberg has ended, and the six-time Grand Slam singles champion will not travel with him next year. In a statement to the ATP website, Edberg said: "Roger and I had a wonderful two years together ... it became very clear from the start that this was going to be a special partnership, working with the greatest ambassador tennis has ever seen."

Severin Luthi will remain Federer's head coach, and joining the Swiss star in 2016 will be Croatian Ivan Ljubicic.

"After 2 very successful years, I would like to thank Stefan Edberg, my childhood idol, for agreeing to join my team," Federer said on Facebook and on his personal website. "It was a dream come true. Although it was supposed to only be for 2014, Stefan was great and agreed to

extend the partnership through this year, which I really appreciated. He taught me so much and his influence on my game will remain."

Edberg said he knew 2015 would be his last as Federer's coach.

"After an amazing 2014, I decided to continue on for another year, but with a clear understanding that it would be my last year given the time commitment," Edberg said in his statement to the ATP.

"Roger still has a lot left to give to the sport of tennis and is capable of winning the big events. Roger and I will remain close friends and I will always feel part of the Federer team. I hope to try and come watch Roger play some tournaments in 2016."

Federer will make his 2016 debut at the Brisbane International, which begins Jan. 3. Federer reached 1,000 career match wins in Brisbane last year en route to the title. □

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America's Cup racing returns to New York with warmup regatta



This photo shows the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. America's Cup racing will return to New York for the first time since 1920 when the America's Cup World Series is sailed off the southern tip of Manhattan on May 7-8, 2016. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

BERNIE WILSON
AP Sports Writer

America's Cup racing will return to New York for the first time in nearly a century when the America's Cup World Series is sailed off the southern tip of Manhattan

on May 7-8.

While the America's Cup World Series is mostly a warmup circuit for the 2017 match in Bermuda, it will be an adrenaline rush compared to the 1920 America's Cup, the last to

be sailed in New York before it was moved to Newport, Rhode Island.

Back then, the America's Cup was sailed in big, classic yachts.

The America's Cup World Series is an ex-

treme sport on water, sailed in fast 45-foot catamarans that rise up on hydrofoils and skim across the tops of the waves.

The exact course on the Hudson River off Battery Park hasn't been finalized, but it should be spectacular, going past the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, with a backdrop of the Manhattan skyline.

"The venue is phenomenal when you think about it," Harvey Schiller, the America's Cup commercial commissioner, said by phone from New York this week. Schiller, a former executive director of the USOC, said the various authorities were cooperative in helping to plan the regatta. "When we had the original meeting, the one thing they said was, 'Don't interfere with the Staten Island Ferry,'" Schiller said.

An ACWS had been planned in New York in spring 2013, but it was

dropped so teams could focus on the America's Cup later that year in San Francisco. The yacht America won the trophy that would bear its name by beating a fleet of British ships around the Isle of Wight in 1851. There were 13 America's Cup matches off New York from 1870-1920, all won by the New York Yacht Club. In 1920, Resolute beat Shamrock IV, owned by Sir Thomas Lipton. "That's where the America's Cup was, as they say, bolted down in that New York Yacht Club, for so many years. I think it's going to be really cool to not only take the cup back there, but the entire Louis Vuitton World Series out on the Hudson River," said Jimmy Spithill, skipper of two-time defending America's Cup champion Oracle Team USA. "They never will have thought about the Hudson and sport in this way before." □

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NBA Capsules

Warriors busy early, beat Pacers 131-123 to go 23-0



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) shoots between Indiana Pacers forward Solomon Hill (44) and center Jordan Hill (27) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015.

(AP Photo/Michael Conroy)

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Klay Thompson scoring a season-high 39 points, Stephen Curry had 29 points, seven rebounds and 10 assists, and the Golden State Warriors extended their perfect start with a 131-123 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Tuesday night.

The Warriors improved to 23-0. They have won 27 straight dating to last season, tying the 2012-13 Heat for the second-longest streak in NBA history.

Thompson scored 29 points in the first half. Golden State led by 28 in the fourth quarter before the Pacers pulled within six in the final 25 seconds.

The Warriors next play on Friday night in Boston.

Indiana was led by Paul George with 33 points and C.J. Miles with 24.

Indiana tied a dubious franchise record in its NBA era by allowing 44 first-quarter points and barely avoided another record-breaking defensive low when it trailed 79-60 at the half.

CAVALIERS 105, TRAIL BLAZERS 100

CLEVELAND (AP) — LeBron James had 33 points and 10 rebounds, and the Cavaliers rallied from an 18-point first-half deficit to get the win.

Kevin Love added 18 points, and a second-half lineup adjustment by coach David Blatt helped Cleveland break a three-game losing streak.

James, who didn't play Saturday in Miami to rest, scored 14 points in the fourth quarter, including a 3-pointer and a three-point play down the stretch. He shot 14 for 24 from the field. Damian Lillard scored 33 points for Portland, which blew a late lead Monday in Milwaukee and appeared to run out of gas as Cleveland came back in the second half.

NETS 110, ROCKETS 105

NEW YORK (AP) — Brook Lopez scored 24 points, Joe Johnson had 22, and Brooklyn beat Houston to sweep the season series for the first

time in 14 years.

Thaddeus Young finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Nets, who have recorded two of their six victories this season against Houston. Bojan Bogdanovic scored 19 points in place of injured rookie Rondae Hollis-Jefferson.

Marcus Thornton scored a season-high 32 points for the Rockets, who fell behind by 18 points and got quiet nights from stars James Harden and Dwight Howard. Corey Brewer had 22 in extended minutes after starting forward Trevor Ariza was lost to a bruised lower back after 4 minutes.

THUNDER 125, GRIZZLIES 88

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Kevin Durant had 32 points and 10 rebounds for Oklahoma City, and Russell Westbrook added 13 points while matching his season high with 16 assists.

The Thunder built the lead to 35 through three quarters and coasted to their second straight win.

Serge Ibaka scored 17 for Oklahoma City, and D.J. Augustin had 13. Dion Waiters finished with 12 points.

Mario Chalmers led Memphis with 19 points, and Jarmichael Green and Marc Gasol had 11 apiece. It was the most points given up by Memphis this season.

The Thunder lead was large enough that the starters, including Westbrook and Durant, sat out the fourth quarter.

KINGS 114, JAZZ 106

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Kings star DeMarcus Cousins had 23 points, 12 rebounds and six assists, and Rudy Gay also scored 23 points.

The Kings took a 12-point lead after one quarter and never trailed again in ending a three-game losing streak.

Omri Casspi scored 19 points and Rajon Rondo had 17 points and 13 assists for the Kings. It was the 13th time this season that Rondo had 10 or more assists. Sacramento shot 55.8 percent. Alec Burks and Gordon Hayward had 18 points apiece for Utah, which had beaten

the Kings three straight and five of six times.

MAGIC 85, NUGGETS 74

DENVER (AP) — Nikola Vucevic had 18 points and 13 rebounds, Evan Fournier hit a big 3-pointer late and Orlando got the win on the road.

Elfrid Payton finished with 18 points as the Magic snapped a five-game skid against the Nuggets.

With the Magic up by two

with 2:38 remaining, Fournier knocked down a 3 to give them some breathing room. Orlando has made a 3-pointer in 677 straight games dating to 2007, a streak that was in jeopardy until Fournier's shot. The team finished 1 for 16 from 3-point range.

Reserve Will Barton scored 23 points for the Nuggets, who fell to 0-11 this season when scoring less than 100 points. □

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SAT 3:30 | 6:20 | 9:10 | 12:05
SUN & HOL 3:30 | 6:20 | 9:10

ADAM SCOTT | TONI COLLETTE
KRAMPUS
MON-THURS 9:35
FRI 9:35 | 11:50
SAT 9:35 | 11:50
SUN & HOL 9:35

JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT | SETH ROGEN
THE NIGHT BEFORE
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FRI 4:50 | 7:10 | 9:30 | 11:50
SAT 2:30 | 4:50 | 7:10 | 9:30 | 11:50
SUN & HOL 2:30 | 4:50 | 7:10 | 9:30

JEFFREY WRIGHT | FRANCES MCDORMAND
Disney Pixar
THE GOOD DINOSAUR
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
3D VERSION
MON-THURS 4:10 | 6:25 | 8:40
FRI 4:10 | 6:25 | 8:40 | 10:55
SAT 1:55 | 4:10 | 6:25 | 8:40 | 10:55
SUN & HOL 1:55 | 4:10 | 6:25 | 8:40

DANIEL CRAIG | CHRISTOPH WALTZ
SPECTRE
007
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 5:45 | 8:50
FRI 5:45 | 8:50
SAT 2:40 | 5:45 | 8:50
SUN & HOL 2:40 | 5:45 | 8:50

JENNIFER LAWRENCE | JOSH HUTCHERSON
THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PART 2
MON-THURS 5:05 | 8:00
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NHL Capsules

New York Islanders beat Philadelphia Flyers 4-3 in shootout

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Kyle Okposo scored the only goal of the shootout, Frans Nielsen scored twice in regulation and the New York Islanders beat the Philadelphia Flyers 4-3 Tuesday night.

Jaroslav Halak had 43 saves through overtime and stopped all three Flyers attempts in the tiebreaker, and Brock Nelson also scored to help the Islanders win for the sixth time in eight games (6-0-2). Ryan White, Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and Claude Giroux scored for Philadelphia. Steve Mason gave up three goals on 10 shots before he was replaced about midway through the second period, and Michal Neuvirth had 16 saves.

Okposo, New York's second skater in the shootout, using a stellar move to pull the puck onto his forehand before roofing it over Neuvirth.

KINGS 3, BLUE JACKETS 2, OT

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Alec Martinez had an assist on the tying goal and then scored the winner at 4:33 of overtime to rally Los Angeles past Columbus.

Christian Ehrhoff and Jeff Carter also scored and Jonathan Quick had 21 saves for the Kings, who won their fifth straight and improved to 6-0-1 in their last seven games.

Scott Hartnell and Matt Calvert scored for Columbus, which lost goalie Sergei Bobrovsky to an apparent injury in the third period.

Bobrovsky had 33 saves and Curtis McElhinney stopped five of seven shots he faced.

Carter tied it for with 1:27 left in regulation, sliding home his 11th of the season in a scramble near the crease with Quick pulled for an extra skater.

In overtime, Dustin Brown passed to Nick Shore on the left side, and he sent it to Martinez at the back door.

CAPITALS 3, RED WINGS 2, SO

WASHINGTON (AP) — T.J. Oshie and Evgeny Kuznetsov scored in the shootout, lifting Washington past Detroit.

Alex Ovechkin tied the score at 10:51 of the third period, and the Capitals killed a Red Wings power play in overtime to force the shootout.

Oshie began by beating Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard, and Gustav Nyquist was denied by Braden Holtby on the other end. Kuznetsov followed

and Garret Sparks made 25 saves to lead Toronto.

P.A. Parenteau and James van Riemsdyk scored in regulation for the Maple Leafs. Kadri converted in the fifth round of the tiebreaker for the win.

Lee Stempniak and Kyle Palmieri scored for the Devils, and Corey Schneider stopped 36 shots. Mike Cammalleri tallied in the shootout.

The Leafs went 1 for 5 on the power play while the Devils scored twice on five

assists. He combined with linemates Tyler Seguin (goal, 3 assists) and Valeri Nichuskin (goal, 2 assists) for three goals and eight assists. Patrick Eaves and Johnny Oduya also scored, and Klingberg also had three assists.

Justin Faulk had two goals, and Jaccob Slavin, Phillip Di Giuseppe and Jeff Skinner also scored for Carolina.

SENATORS 4, PANTHERS 2

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Mike

the Senators after winning the previous 10.

BLUES 4, COYOTES 1

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Vladimir Tarasenko and Alexander Steen scored in the second period to help the St. Louis Blues rally for a 4-1 win over the Arizona Coyotes on Tuesday night.

Kevin Shattenkirk and David Backes also scored and Jake Allen made 22 saves as the Blues snapped a three-game losing streak. Steve Downie scored for the Coyotes and Mike Smith stopped 18 shots.

The Blues had scored just three goals in their previous three games, going 0-2-1. St. Louis was 2-2-3 over the past seven and 4-5-3 over its last 12. They have now won six straight against the Coyotes and are 9-0-1 in the last 10 meetings.

BLACKHAWKS 4, PREDATORS 1

CHICAGO (AP) — Patrick Kane extended his points streak to 23 games with an empty-net goal with 1:36 left, and Chicago beat Nashville.

Teuvo Teravainen and Andrew Shaw each had a goal and an assist for the Blackhawks, and Corey Crawford made 36 saves. Dennis Rasmussen scored in his NHL debut.

Kane's 17th goal was his 600th NHL point.

The winger, who entered as the NHL's leading scorer, has 14 goals and 23 assists during his franchise-record streak.

Eric Nystrom scored for Nashville in its first meeting with Chicago since the Blackhawks won their first-round playoff series in six games last spring.

Pekka Rinne blocked 20 shots for the Predators, who were coming off a 3-2 victory at Boston on Monday night.

FLAMES 4, SHARKS 2

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Mikael Backlund had a goal and an assist to lead Calgary to its seventh straight home win. □



New York Islanders' Kyle Okposo scores a goal against Philadelphia Flyers' Michal Neuvirth in a shootout during an NHL hockey game, Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015, in Philadelphia. New York won 4-3 in a shootout.

(AP Photo/Matt Slocum)

by with an easy goal off a deke to his right and Pavel Datsyuk missed to provide the Capitals with the win.

Justin Williams also scored for Washington.

Howard stopped 38 shots. Despite the loss, the Red Wings earned a point in an 11th straight game (8-0-3), their longest streak since 2010. Henrik Zetterberg and Tomas Jurco scored for Detroit.

MAPLE LEAFS 3, DEVILS 2, SO

TORONTO (AP) — Tyler Bozak and Nazem Kadri scored in the shootout,

chances with the man advantage.

STARS 6, HURRICANES 5

DALLAS (AP) — Patrick Sharp scored on the power play with 19 seconds remaining to lift Dallas.

Sharp took a pass from John Klingberg above the right faceoff circle and sent a slap shot off Carolina goalie Eddie Lack and into the net.

The Hurricanes had rallied with four third-period goals to tie the score with 6:43 remaining.

Dallas' Jamie Benn scored his league-leading 19th goal and added three as-

Hoffman scored the go-ahead goal to help Ottawa get its third win in four games.

Kyle Turris and Zack Smith also scored for the Senators and Mark Stone had three assists.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau added a short-handed empty net goal with 2:31 left and Craig Anderson finished with 25 saves.

Reilly Smith and Logan Shaw scored for the Panthers and Roberto Luongo stopped 20 shots. Florida lost its second straight after winning five in a row. Luongo lost his third in a row to

U.S. wants social media to report extremist activity

TAMI ABDOLLAH
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers on Tuesday introduced legislation to require social media companies to report any online extremist activity they become aware of to law enforcement. The bill by Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Sen. Richard Burr is a replica of language that was dropped from the Senate's annual intelligence authorization bill in September. Companies would be required to report to law enforcement if they became aware of activity such as attack planning, recruiting or distribution of extremist material. "This bill doesn't require companies to take any additional actions to discover terrorist activity, it merely requires them to report such activity to law enforcement when they come across it," Feinstein said in a statement.

Last week, 28-year-old Syed Farook and his wife, 29-year-old Tashfeen Malik, went on a shooting attack in San Bernardino, California, that killed 14 people and left 21 injured. A Facebook post on Malik's page around the time of the attack included a pledge of allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State group, and the FBI is investigating the shooting as an act of terrorism.

Facebook found the post, which was under an alias, the day after the attack. The company removed the profile from public view and informed law enforcement. In his address to the nation Sunday, President Barack Obama urged high-tech and law enforcement leaders to make it harder for extremists to use technology to escape from justice. Social media increasingly has become a tool of recruitment and radicalization for the Islamic State group, and tech companies are dedicating more resources to tracking reports of extremist or other violent threats. □

Facebook lifts ban on content from rival network Tsu

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Facebook has lifted a ban that blocked material from Tsu.co, a small rival challenging the world's largest social network's financial dependence on free content shared by its 1.5 billion users.

The reversal comes a month after The Associated Press published a story airing concerns that Facebook might be abusing its power to thwart competition and stifle the concept advanced by Tsu that people should be paid for the stories and images that they post on social networks.

"We won in the court of public opinion," Tsu CEO Sebastian Sobczak said Tuesday. "When you have something new and novel in the market like what we are doing, this kind of validation is extremely important. It feels like we just got a golden stamp of approval."

The dispute between one of the Internet's most powerful companies and Tsu began in late September when Facebook removed nearly 10 million posts containing links and other references to Tsu (pronounced "soo"). Facebook also blocked attempts to post anything else that sent traffic to Tsu.co, both on the pages of its social network or on in its popular Messenger and Instagram applications.

Tsu's ouster stemmed from its practice of sharing ad revenue with its users. The payments are based on

how many people read their posts.

Facebook decided Tsu's payments represented a financial incentive for people to share links on its network, something the Menlo Park, California, company

that required New York-based Tsu.co to remove a feature that allowed its users to share content directly to Facebook with one click on an app. Now Tsu.co users will have to go through several extra

est said she was pleased to recover hundreds of her dog drawings that had been deleted from her Facebook page during the tiff between the two social networks. She fears the restored links to the



Sebastian Sobczak, CEO of Tsu.co, poses for a photo in his company's New York office. On Tuesday, Facebook lifted a ban that blocked material from Tsu.co, a small rival challenging the world's largest social network's financial dependence on free content shared by its 1.5 billion users. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

says it prohibits because it believes the practice pollutes its service with the digital rubbish known as "spam." Sobczak contends Facebook hoped to destroy an upstart trying to popularize the idea that people should get paid for posts that help sell advertising. Facebook has built a highly profitable company with a market value of \$300 billion, partly because it doesn't pay for the material that keeps people and advertisers coming to its social network.

The two sides resolved their differences with a truce

steps to transfer their posts to Facebook, or just copy and paste a link.

The concession prompted Facebook to restore the Tsu posts that had previously been erased from its social network and allow additional material from Tsu, which has nearly 5 million users. Tsu links can also be circulated on Instagram and Facebook's Messenger app.

Facebook spokeswoman Melanie Ensign described the circumstances surrounding Tsu's two-month ban as a "miscommunication." Tsu user Claudia Ever-

est sketches that sell for \$30 apiece won't attract as much traffic as they might otherwise have because they date back to months ago and are now buried in her Facebook feed.

Despite that frustration, Everest is pleased Facebook and Tsu have settled their differences.

"I believe that despite all the social networks looking to make money and therefore being in direct competition, there are benefits to everyone if there is a certain amount of sharing between sites," Everest wrote in Tuesday email. □

Samsung to venture into autonomous driving tech

YOUNGYUNG LEE

AP Technology Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Samsung Electronics said Wednesday it will set up a team to develop an auto components business focusing on autonomous driving technology and entertainment systems.

Kwon Oh-hyun, a vice chairman who has long managed Samsung's electronics component

business, will oversee the new team.

The announcement comes as Samsung is under pressure to find new businesses to offset sagging profit from its smartphone sales.

Technology companies have been expanding into aspects of auto technology and some have formed partnership with automakers.

Google has been testing self-driving cars for six years and Apple has developed software for automakers called CarPlay that let drivers use an iPhone to operate an entertainment system.

Samsung was silent about its plans until now. It had an auto manufacturing business in the 1990s, under the leadership of Chairman Lee Kun-hee,

an enthusiast for sports cars. But the venture went bankrupt in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Some other Samsung companies have auto interests. Samsung SDI supplies lithium-ion batteries for electric car makers and Samsung Electro-Mechanics, an electronic parts maker, said last year that it would enter the auto components business. □

Tech stocks lead a broad decline in the US market

BERNARD CONDON

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A slump in technology shares on Wednesday helped turn early gains in U.S. stock indexes into losses across industries, extending the market's losing streak to a third day.

Investors sent the Dow Jones industrial average up 200 points in morning, then began dumping some big tech stocks. Apple fell 2.2 percent and Microsoft lost 1.5 percent.

By the end of the day, seven of the 10 industry sectors in the Standard and Poor's 500 index fell. Suppliers of raw materials, the focus of aggressive selling in recent days, rose 3.1 percent as investors hunted for bargains. "You've got two days of massive selling of oil and commodity companies, so perhaps some are over-sold," said Bryn Mawr Trust Chief Investment Officer Ernie Cecilia. He added, though, that they weren't cheap enough yet for him to join in the buying.

The Dow index lost 75.70 points, or 0.4 percent, to 17,492.30. The S&P 500 gave up 15.97 points, or 0.8 percent, to 2,047.62. The Nasdaq composite dropped 75.38 points, or 1.5 percent, to 5,022.87.

Yahoo slumped after the struggling Internet company said it would scrap a spinoff of its big stake in the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba. The stock lost 45 cents, or 1.3 percent, to \$34.40. Yahoo said it will instead explore breaking off the rest of its business into a

new company.

Some of the biggest gainers were stocks that suffered big losses the day before. Freeport McMoRan, a miner that fell 7 percent on Tuesday, rose 3.7 percent, gaining 25 cents to close at \$6.99.

strategist at Bell Curve Trading, said a recent slump in oil and other major commodities is signaling that the global economy is weak.

That could mean more rocky days in the market.

"You got commodities in a

15 cents to close at \$40.11 a barrel in London. In other trading, wholesale gasoline rose 2.8 cents to close at \$1.232 a gallon, heating oil fell two cents to \$1.239 a gallon and natural gas fell 0.8 cent to \$2.062 per 1,000 cubic feet.



Trader Peter Tuchman works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015. A slump in technology shares on Wednesday helped turn early gains in U.S. stock indexes into losses across industries, extending the market's losing streak to a third day.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

Helping boost raw material stocks were news reports that two giant chemical companies, Dow Chemical and DuPont, were in talks to combine. Dow Chemical rose \$6.07, or 11.9 percent, to \$56.97. DuPont climbed \$7.89, or 11.8 percent, to \$74.49.

Oil drillers, which have been beaten down recently, also rallied. Exxon Mobil and Chevron each rose 1.3 percent, despite another drop in benchmark U.S. oil. Bill Strazzullo, chief market

death spiral, and that's just not impacting the U.S., but the global economy," he said. "Investors are taking off risk."

Among other stocks making big moves Wednesday, Costco fell \$9.15, or 5 percent, to \$159.72 after reporting weaker earnings than analysts were expecting.

Benchmark U.S. crude slipped 35 cents to close at \$37.16 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the international standard, fell

U.S. government bond prices rose.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.21 percent from 2.22 percent late Tuesday. The U.S. dollar fell to 121.24 yen from 123.05 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1023 from \$1.0890.

Previous and industrial metals futures closed broadly higher. Gold edged up \$1.20 to \$1,076.50 an ounce, silver rose seven cents to \$14.19 an ounce and copper gained a penny to \$2.07 a pound. □

STREET BRIEFS

Dutch Rabobank plans restructure, slash 9,000 jobs

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch cooperative bank Rabobank says it is slashing 9,000 jobs as part of a restructuring to boost its finances and bring it closer to customers. The bank announced the moves Wednesday, saying it would "make every possible effort to avoid compulsory redundancies" as it cuts the jobs by 2018. Worldwide, Rabobank employs some 48,000 people. Rabobank's reputation has been battered in recent years. Two years ago it agreed to pay about \$1 billion to settle U.S., British and Dutch charges of manipulating a key global interest rate. The payout included a \$325 million deal with the U.S. Justice Department to allow the bank to avoid criminal prosecution in exchange for cooperation. Rabobank says it aims to focus lending on food and agriculture worldwide and on other Dutch growth sectors.

Shares of DuPont, Dow up on reports of merger talks

DOVER, Del. (AP) — Shares of Dow Chemical and DuPont are trading sharply higher amid reports that the two chemical giants are in advanced merger discussions. The Wall Street Journal first reported on Tuesday that the companies were planning to merge and to then split into three companies focused on agriculture, specialty chemicals and materials. Shares of The Dow Chemical Co. based in Midland, Michigan, rose 11 percent to \$56.48 in early trading Wednesday. Shares at one point hit an all-time high of \$56.88. Shares of E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Co., based in Wilmington, Delaware, rose 12.5 percent to \$74.88. Multiple media outlets say the two companies, both of which have a strong presence in the agriculture sector, were discussing a merger, with an official announcement possible as early as Thursday. □

Pep Boys: Icahn's buyout better than Bridgestone's

NEW YORK (AP) — Pep Boys said Wednesday that it told Bridgestone that it may ditch an already agreed upon \$835 million buyout offer and go with a competing offer from Carl Icahn's investment firm that is worth \$2 million more.

Icahn Enterprises is offering \$15.50 for each Pep Boys share, compared with Bridgestone's offer of \$15

per share. The buyout from Icahn Enterprises is worth about \$837.4 million. Icahn, an activist investor, has an 11.2 percent stake in Pep Boys, according to FactSet. Bridgestone, a Japan-based tires and auto service company, has until Friday to increase its offer or Pep Boys said it will take Icahn's deal. Pep Boys said it notified Bridgestone of its

decision.

Bridgestone confirmed in a statement Wednesday that it received the notice and said any further decisions will be made based on what makes financial sense for the company. Bridgestone said it still believes its buyout of Pep Boys "is good for the combined business." The company declined to com-

ment further.

Pep Boys - Manny, Moe & Jack, based in Philadelphia, has about 800 locations around the country that sell auto parts and repairs vehicles.

Shares of Pep Boys were down 2 cents at \$16.28 in midday trading Wednesday. Their shares have risen 66 percent so far this year. □

VW: CO2 emissions problem far smaller than suspected

GEIR MOULSON
Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Volkswagen said Wednesday that a problem with carbon dioxide emissions is far smaller than initially suspected, with further checks finding "slight discrepancies" in only a few models and no evidence of illegal changes to fuel consumption and emissions figures.

In a case that is separate from its scandal over cheating on U.S. emissions tests for the pollutant nitrogen oxide, Volkswagen said in November it had also found "unexplained inconsistencies" in the carbon dioxide emissions from up to 800,000 vehicles. On Wednesday, however, it said that further internal

investigations and measurement checks found that "almost all of these model variants do correspond to the CO2 figures originally determined." "This means that these vehicles can be marketed and sold without any limitations," the company said in a statement. "The suspicion that the fuel consumption figures of current

production vehicles had been unlawfully changed was not confirmed." Shares in Volkswagen jumped 6 percent on the news. Volkswagen said Wednesday that "slight deviations" were found in nine variants of Volkswagen brand models — versions of the Polo, Scirocco, Jetta, Golf and Passat with an annual

production of some 36,000 cars, or 0.5 percent of the brand's total production. Those deviations amount to "a few grams of CO2 on average," it said. "These model variants will be re-measured by a neutral technical service under the supervision of the appropriate authority by Christmas," Volkswagen added. □

Yahoo going back to the drawing board with Alibaba spinoff

MICHAEL LIEDTKE
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Yahoo's long-running identity crisis is spiraling in a new direction now that the company is abandoning a year's work on a tax-dodging spinoff to pursue an alternative path that will carve off its Internet business instead. The about-face announced Wednesday opens another chapter in the dysfunctional drama that has been swirling around Yahoo for most of the past decade and raises more questions about the fate of websites and mobile applications used by hundreds of millions of people around the world. Many of Yahoo's 10,700 employees may also be fretting about their job security, with CEO Marissa Mayer promising to announce plans for a cost-cutting reorganization late next month and many analysts speculating that the company's Internet business will be sold if the latest overhaul doesn't bear fruit



Yahoo president and CEO Marissa Mayer speaks in Las Vegas. Yahoo announced Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, it is scrapping its original plan to spin off its prized stake in China's Alibaba Group and will instead break off the rest of its business into a new company. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)

quickly. The uncertainty and reshuffling threaten to cause more distractions at a time when Yahoo already is struggling to keep up in the race for digital advertising with bigger rivals such as Google and Facebook and nimbler startups. It also may raise more doubts about whether Mayer will be able to turn around Yahoo, even though com-

pany Chairman Maynard Webb said Wednesday that the board of directors remains in her corner after three-and-half years on the job. The latest twists revolve around Yahoo's efforts to avoid paying taxes on a \$1 billion investment that it made a decade ago in one of China's hottest Internet companies, Alibaba Group. That investment is

now worth \$32 billion, far more than the rest of Yahoo's operations. Yahoo began this year by drawing up plans to spin off the Alibaba stake into a separate holding company called Aabaco in what was supposed to be a tax-free move. But the Internal Revenue Service jeopardized the plan by refusing to guarantee the Alibaba spinoff would qualify for a

tax exemption. Under mounting shareholder pressure, Yahoo scrapped that spinoff Wednesday and said that it will instead try to break off everything but the Alibaba holdings into another company. That process could be even more complicated than the original spinoff and take more than a year before Yahoo shareholders get stock in a newly formed company that has yet to be named. With Yahoo hanging in limbo, prospective bidders could emerge for the company's Internet operations, which Wall Street has been valuing at next to nothing amid a decline in revenue. Analysts believe Yahoo's websites, mobile applications, ad services and well-known brand eventually could be worth \$3 billion to \$5 billion to a list of suitors that could include AT&T Inc., Verizon Communications, Comcast Corp., IAC/InterActiveCorp and private equity firms that specialized in buying troubled companies. □

Toyota starts sales of 4th generation Prius hybrid auto

YURI KAGEYAMA
AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota said Wednesday it expects annual sales of its newly-released fourth generation Prius hybrid to reach as many as 350,000 vehicles despite a big drop in oil prices making traditional gasoline cars cheap to run. The automaker is promising mileage of 40.8 kilometers a liter (96 miles a gallon) in Japan for its latest ver-

sion of the gasoline-electric car, better than the 40 kpm initially projected. Mileage tests and driving conditions differ by nation. Toyota Motor Corp. has promised about 52 mpg in the U.S. Executive Vice President Mitsuhiro Kato told reporters at a Tokyo showroom, that the latest Prius made fewer driving experience compromises to achieve better mileage. "There is

nothing you feel you are suffering through to get that mileage," he said. Improvements in the battery, engine, wind resistance and weight are contributing to the improved performance, according to Toyota. The new Prius also got a design makeover, although reaction has been divided. Toyota has sold 3.6 million Prius vehicles globally, making it the world's top-selling

hybrid, but its popularity is mostly limited to the U.S. and Japan. Toyota faced skepticism when it first introduced Prius in 1997. Sales last year totaled about 240,000 vehicles. "In my mind, there is no doubt that this new model will be well received," said Max Zanan, chief executive of IDS Group, a New York-based consulting company that specializes in auto retailing. "It will

continue to set the pace for, and dominate, the global hybrid car market." A hybrid switches back and forth between a gasoline engine and an electric motor to deliver an efficient ride and reduce emissions. They deliver more of a perk in stop-and-go city driving than freeway driving. Japan sales started Wednesday, and are set for January in North America and February in Europe. □

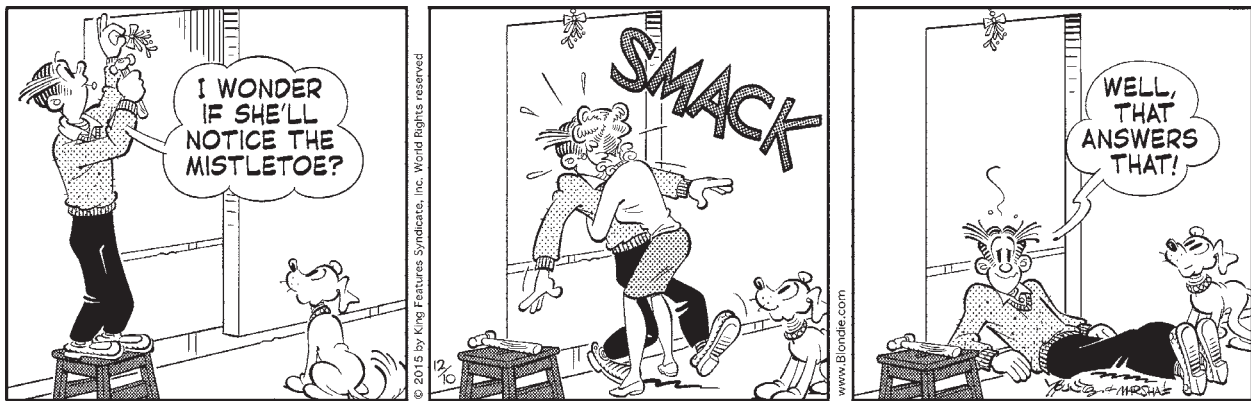
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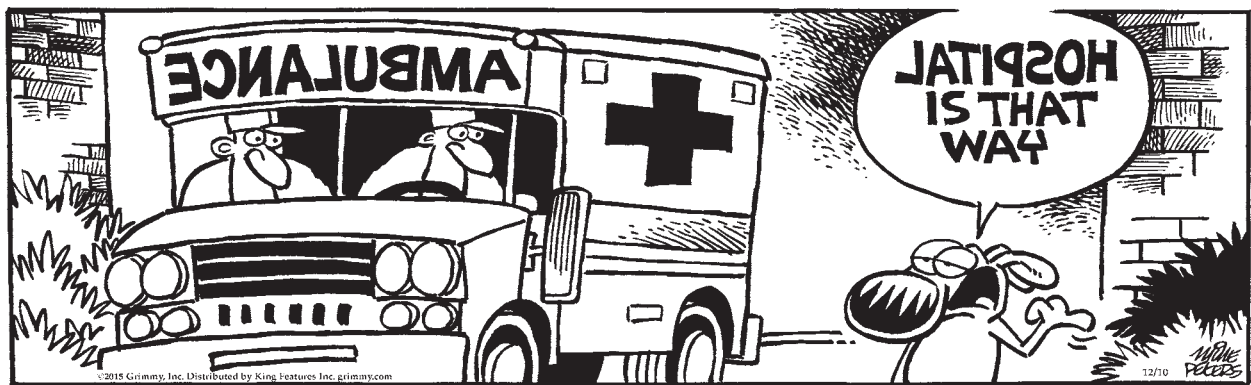
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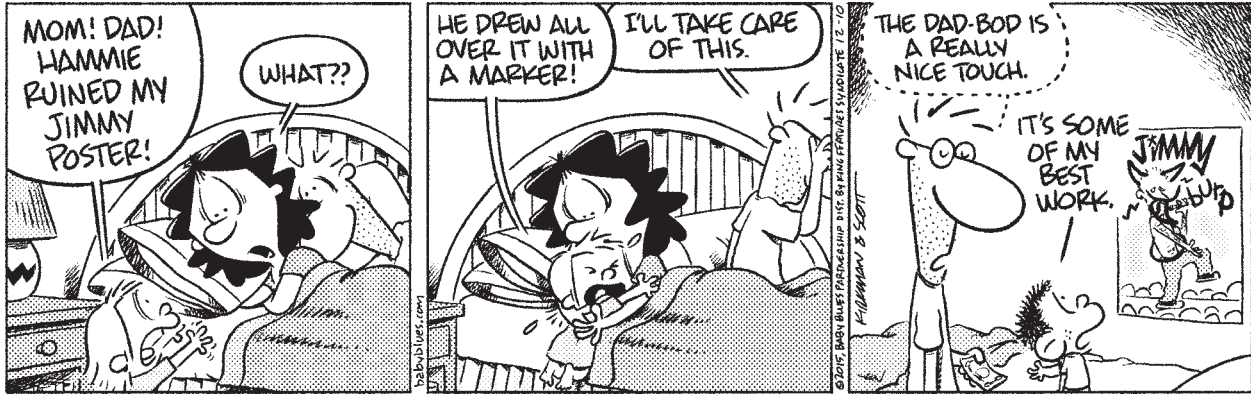
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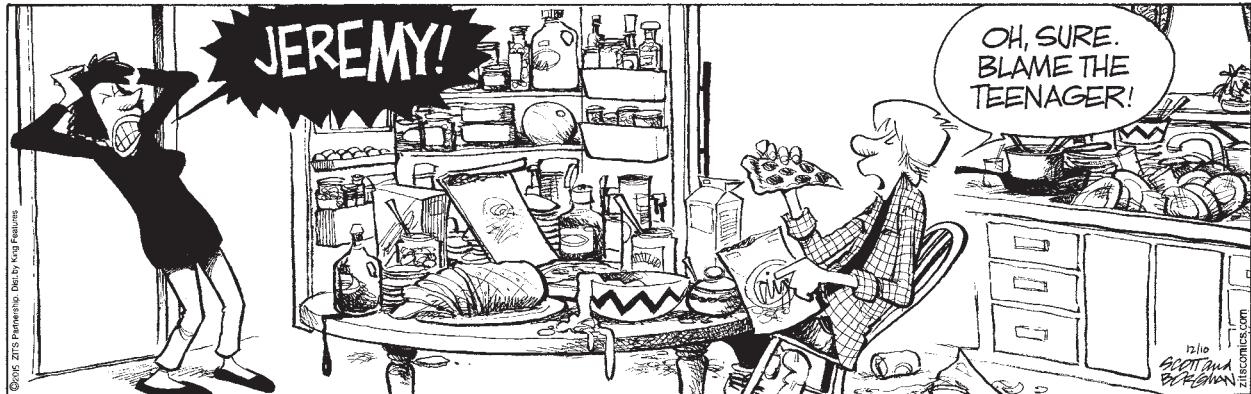
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	1		6		4			
6				9				
			3					9
		4		5		8		
8			4		7			1
	2			1		6		
9				5				
		8						6
		7		4			5	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/10

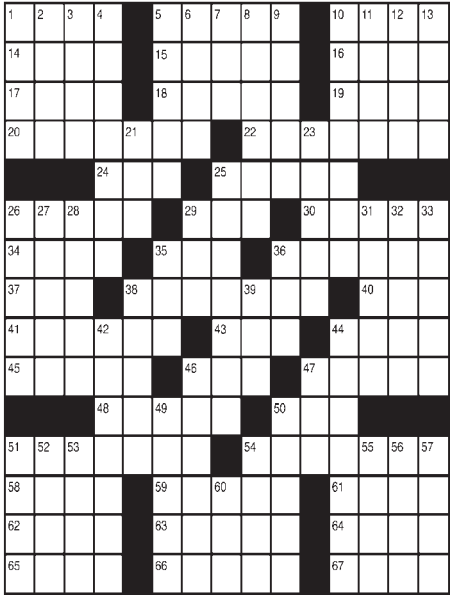
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

3	2	5	1	8	6	7	4	9
6	7	9	5	4	3	2	8	1
4	1	8	2	9	7	5	3	6
7	6	4	8	5	1	3	9	2
2	8	1	6	3	9	4	7	5
5	9	3	4	7	2	1	6	8
9	4	2	3	1	8	6	5	7
8	5	6	7	2	4	9	1	3
1	3	7	9	6	5	8	2	4

ACROSS

- 1 ___ in; wearing
- 5 Modify to fit
- 10 Hole-making tools
- 14 Take a fancy to
- 15 Actor Willem
- 16 Underground part of a plant
- 17 Fail to include
- 18 Prefix for act or national
- 19 Loose garment for Caesar
- 20 Cure-all
- 22 Mobile home
- 24 Debtor's note
- 25 Pitt and Garrett
- 26 Burn with a liquid
- 29 Cook in oil
- 30 Shoestrings
- 34 Fancy vases
- 35 Hawaii's Mauna



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/10/15

DOWN

- 1 Clippety-___
- 2 Peru's capital
- 3 Related
- 4 Particulars
- 5 "Bye, Jacques!"
- 6 Actress Delany
- 7 Toward a ship's stern
- 8 Longfellow's specialty
- 9 ___ cotta; red pottery clay
- 10 Skilled craftsman
- 11 Sheep's coat
- 12 Theater box
- 13 One of 50 on the U.S. flag
- 21 MA's Cape ___
- 23 Speak without preparation
- 25 Intertwined
- 26 Debonair
- 27 Inhumane
- 28 Cherub
- 29 Wild canine
- 31 Actor Romero
- 32 Overdo the role
- 33 Fencing sword
- 35 Boy
- 36 Lion or lynx
- 38 Singing voice

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

OFTEN	ADAM	MANE
ALONE	DALE	ODOR
TERRA	OMIT	LAIR
SENATORS	ELAPSE	
	GENE	BOOSTED
CARESS	EARN	
UNO	TELLS	GETTY
STAR	TULIP	SORE
PINED	RECUR	NUN
	LIKED	TEASES
ORDERED	HUGE	
BERATE	SEPARATE	
ALAS	PAPA	TIBIA
MAKE	EARL	TALES
AXES	RAYS	ALERT

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- 39 Police officer
- 42 Pensioner
- 44 Esteemed
- 46 Save from peril
- 47 Hang limply
- 49 Instruct
- 50 Female horses
- 51 "Once ___ a time..."
- 52 Café's list
- 53 Fill a suitcase
- 54 Pillar
- 55 Gaming cubes
- 56 Prolonged pain
- 57 ___ around; compare prices
- 60 Refrain syllable

Classifieds

Time -Share for sale / rent

La Cabana wk 49
ground floor one bdr unit 105C
Friday starts step to pool, ocean
view \$2975 and wk 50
La Quinta
1 br unit 2304 for rent 2015 \$725
or buy \$52075
Local 565-9394 or
508-651-0016
e-mail: usmc53w@aol.com

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swimmingpool. The property
is fully fenced in and the
landscaping is beautiful.

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overlook Eagle Beach
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Studio week 48,49, 50 ,
Ground Floor walk to Pool,
Saturday Check in ,
Price :\$6500 each
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24/7

Christmas delivery: 1st US space station shipment in months



In this frame grab from video shown on NASA TV, the Cygnus supply ship approaches the robot arm of the International Space Station, in preparation for capture, early Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, delivering Christmas presents and much-needed groceries for the resident astronauts.

(NASA TV via AP)

MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — The International Space Station accepted its first U.S. shipment in more than half a year early Wednesday, receiving

Christmas presents and much-needed groceries for the resident astronauts. "There's much rejoicing on the ground," Mission Control radioed.

NASA astronaut Kjell Lindgren (CHELL LEND-grin) used the space station's big robot arm to grab the capsule and its 3 ½ tons of cargo. The operation went smoothly, thanks to all the practice Lindgren put in. He operated the crane via joy sticks, joking earlier

this week, "I knew those hours playing video games would come in handy!" The capture occurred as the spacecraft soared 250 miles above the Arabian sea, skirting the coast of Oman. Three hours later, the capsule was bolted into place. The door was to remain shut until Thursday, though, given the crew's busy schedule. The supply ship, dubbed Cygnus after the swan constellation, rocketed into orbit Sunday from Cape Canaveral, Florida. NASA's commercial shipper, Orbital ATK, used another company's rocket for the launch. Orbital supply runs had been on hold ever since a launch explosion last year. The other U.S. supplier, SpaceX, meanwhile, has not made a delivery since April because of a launch accident. Orbital flight controllers, based at company headquarters in Dulles, Virginia, applauded and shook hands once the Cygnus made contact with the space station Wednesday morning. They wore retro-

style white shirts, black slacks and skinny black ties in honor of the Mercury astronaut for whom the capsule had been named, Deke Slayton, a commercial space pioneer before his death in 1993.

The previous Cygnus also bore Slayton's name, but ended up being destroyed seconds after liftoff in October 2014. Orbital christened this capsule the S.S. Deke Slayton II. NASA is paying billions of dollars to Orbital and SpaceX to stock the space station. The pantry got a little too empty for NASA's taste over the past year; besides the two lost commercial shipments, Russia also endured a failed supply run. The Russian Space Agency didn't take long, however, to resume flights; another shipment is scheduled for just before Christmas.

Orbital's next flight is in March, again using another company's Atlas V rocket. SpaceX, meanwhile, aims to resume shipments in January with its own Falcon rocket. This was Lindgren's last big job at the space station. He's scheduled to return to Earth on Friday, along with a Russian and Japanese, following a five-month mission. Two of the six-man crew — space station commander Scott Kelly and Mikhail Kornienko — are three-quarters of the way through a one-year mission. They're especially eager to see the Cygnus contents, since they won't be back on the planet until March. "It's great to see a new vehicle up here," Kelly said in a news interview. "We've had some difficulties, so getting Cygnus safely on board has been a great treat for us."

NIH said it plans to spend \$160 million on ECHO research this year. □

NIH tries again at studying environment, child health

LAURAN NEERGAARD

AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The

U.S. National Institutes of Health is launching a new project to help unravel how early-in-life environmental exposures may affect autism, obesity and certain other childhood disorders. It's a second shot at tackling those important questions, after a more ambitious research attempt failed. The goal is "really to understand that interplay between the environment and genetics and behavior that play out to deter-

mine whether a child ends up healthy or not," said Dr. Francis Collins, the NIH's director. Called ECHO, for Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes, the seven-year project will examine such interactions in pregnancy and early childhood, focusing on four areas of special public health concern: asthma and other airway disorders; obesity; neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism and learning disability; and birth defects and other infant health outcomes.

The project announced this week is a next step after the failure of a massive earlier attempt to study how the environment and genetics interact in child health. The National Children's Study was supposed to eventually track 100,000 children from womb to adulthood. A year ago, Collins canceled that research, after years of planning and pilot-testing only to have scientific advisers conclude it was too unwieldy to work. The ECHO project takes a different, and more streamlined, approach. Rather

than starting from scratch to recruit participants, researchers with child health studies already under way can apply to expand them, using new technologies to measure even small environmental exposures that would be analyzed at NIH-designated labs. For example, an asthma study might use wearable monitors to uncover what triggers a child's asthma attacks, or compare air pollution sensors with inhaler use. NIH said it plans to spend \$160 million on ECHO research this year. □

NIH said it plans to spend \$160 million on ECHO research this year. □

As awards season takes shape, diversity is out of the running

JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hollywood's awards season is taking shape, but if early indications are anything to go on, the Academy Awards won't be fielding a much more diverse batch of nominees a year after the academy was ridiculed for an Oscars featuring only white actors.

It's still early and the season is very much in flux, with some of the top contenders including the journalism drama "Spotlight," the sci-fi adventure "The Martian" and the lesbian romance "Carol." On Wednesday, the Screen Actors Guild Awards — an important Oscars predictor — will present their nominees, with the Golden Globe nominations from the Hollywood Foreign Press on Thursday. But the whiteness of the season has already drawn attention.

Surveying the 11 white nominees for best actor and best actress at the Gotham Independent Awards last week, co-host and "Broad City" star Ilana Glazer commented: "You guys could open up a Williams Sonoma."

Oscar prognosticators are by no means a sure bet, but they offer a realistic gauge of what films and what performers are likely in the Oscar mix. Though several awards contenders have not yet opened in theaters, every film but "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" has been screened for press; for those following closely, much of the field is already established, long before Oscar nominations are announced Jan. 14.

The latest predictions gathered from Oscar watchers in a regular poll by the movie blog Movie City News — the "Gurus o' Gold" — forecast only one non-white nominee in all four acting categories: Idris Elba in "Beasts of Nation." Outside chances include Will Smith ("Concussion"), Benicio del Toro ("Sicario") and Samuel L. Jackson ("The Hateful Eight").

When the Hollywood Reporter convened likely actress nominees like Cate Blanchett ("Carol"), Jennifer Lawrence ("Joy") and Brie Larson ("Room") for its magazine cover round table — a regular glossy feature of awards season — it acknowledged a lack of diversity in its choices. Round table host Stephen Galloway faced the issue in a column, writing: "The awful truth is that there are no minority actresses in genuine contention for an Oscar this year."

The only best picture candidate with a non-white protagonist comes in 10th from the Gurus, on the cusp of making it into the category: "Creed," the acclaimed Rocky sequel starring Michael B. Jordan. Best director, too, seems likely to include only males, with most expecting nods for some combination of Tom McCarthy ("Spotlight"), Ridley Scott ("The Martian"), Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu ("The Revenant"), Todd Haynes ("Carol"), Steven Spielberg ("Bridge of Spies") and George Miller ("Mad Max: Fury Road"). In a way, an Oscars that looks a lot like the previous Academy Awards wouldn't be surprising. Hollywood's deep equality issues, in front and behind the camera, don't get magically solved when Oscar ballots get mailed. The academy can only nominate the films that get made, and criticism might be best directed toward executives with the power to greenlight.

Then, when changes do come, they could take years to move through Hollywood's production pipeline to the big screen. □

Screen Actors Guild: 'Trumbo' leads noms in murky awards season

LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Hollywood blacklist drama "Trumbo" scored a leading three Screen Actors Guild Awards nominations on Wednesday, and sleeper contenders "Beasts of No Nation" and "Straight Outta Compton" entered the awards conversation in a real way when both were nominated for best ensemble drama.

"Beasts of No Nation" star

season prospects were unknown. On Monday, the African-American Film Critics Association named the N.W.A. drama their best of the year, but it's been mostly overlooked by other critics' awards.

The nominations helped bring a murky awards season into a bit more focus, and SAG's choices highlighted a few underdog performances.

Leading female performance nominees included

ed for "The Big Short," Mark Rylance for the Cold War thriller "Bridge of Spies," Michael Shannon for playing a predatory real estate agent in "99 Homes" and young star Jacob Tremblay for playing a child in captivity in "Room."

Supporting actress contenders included Rachel McAdams ("Spotlight"), Kate Winslet ("Steve Jobs"), Alicia Vikander ("The Danish Girl") and Rooney Mara ("Carol"). Mara and Vikan-



Actors Anna Faris, left, and Anthony Mackie announce the nominations for the 22nd Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, in West Hollywood, Calif. The show will be held on Jan. 30, 2016, in Los Angeles.

(Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

Idris Elba was also nominated for best supporting actor, as well as for his role in TV's "Luther." Other best ensemble nominees included "Spotlight," which is emerging as the strongest candidate for best picture so far this season; "Trumbo"; and the housing bubble dramedy "The Big Short."

The 22nd annual Screen Actors Guild Awards honoring the best film and television performances of the year will be presented Jan. 30. Starry ensemble casts left out of the SAG nominations included Ridley Scott's "The Martian," Quentin Tarantino's "The Hateful Eight" and David O. Russell's "Joy."

While "Straight Outta Compton" was a box office and critical hit, its award

Cate Blanchett ("Carol"), Brie Larson ("Room") and Saoirse Ronan ("Brooklyn"), all of whom have dominated awards buzz, but also Sarah Silverman for the depression indie "I Smile Back," and Helen Mirren for "Woman in Gold," about an elderly Jewish woman looking to reclaim art once stolen by the Nazis. Mirren was also nominated for a supporting performance for "Trumbo."

The lead actor nominees were a bit more expected, with recognition for Bryan Cranston ("Trumbo"), Johnny Depp ("Black Mass"), Leonardo DiCaprio ("The Revenant"), Michael Fassbender ("Steve Jobs"), and Eddie Redmayne ("The Danish Girl").

In the supporting category, Christian Bale was nominat-

ed both have significant onscreen time in their respective movies, which has led some awards prognosticators to criticize their "supporting actress" campaigns.

Nominees are selected by separate movie and TV nominating panels, each comprised of over 2,000 randomly selected SAG members.

Many members of the SAG movie panel also vote for the Academy Awards and as a result, the SAG nominees have traditionally served as a helpful indicator of potential Oscar acting nominees. Aside from "Spotlight" this season's main players should come further into focus on Thursday when the nominees are announced for the Golden Globe Awards. □

Bonnie Lou, pioneering country and rock singer dies at 91

CINCINNATI (AP) — Bonnie Lou, a pioneering country music artist and rock 'n' roll singer and who later became a TV host, has died. She was 91.

Her husband, Milton Okum, said that she died in a Cincinnati nursing home early Tuesday.

Born Mary Joan Kath in Towanda, Illinois, Lou began playing the violin and

guitar as a child. By age 16, she was singing and performing on local radio stations in the Midwest.

Her big break came a year later when she was signed to a contract to perform on a barn dance show, the Brush Creek Follies. She was known as Sally Carson and her group was The Rhythm Rangers. The show was broadcast nationwide.

Known for her yodeling, she later was dubbed Bonnie Lou and was featured on a show that became the Midwestern Hayride, a country and western radio program on WLW in Cincinnati.

This led to tours and eventually several performances at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville.

Bonnie Lou was a popular

radio performer through the 1940s and some of her performances were cut to acetate and released to the public. In the 1950s, she signed with record companies as a country music singer.

She had Top 10 country hits with "Tennessee Wig Walk" and "Seven Lonely Days." Each of the records sold about 750,000 copies.

Later, she began recording rockabilly. In 1954, she recorded the dance song "Two-Step Side-Step," written by Murry Wilson, whose sons became rock legends as the Beach Boys. A year later, her first rock 'n' roll record, "Daddy-O," rose to No. 14 on the Billboard chart.

She was a member of the Rockabilly Hall of Fame. □

Album inspired by Sandy Hook victim gets Grammy nominations



This photo shows Jimmy Greene in Central Park in New York. For saxophonist Greene, whose daughter died in the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting, earning Grammy nominations for his album inspired by late daughter is "bittersweet." Greene earned his first pair of Grammy nominations this week, including best arrangement, instruments and vocals for "When I Come Home" and best jazz instrumental album for "Beautiful Life," which he created in honor of Ana Marquez-Greene and also features her vocals.

(Jimmy and Dena Katz/Jimmy Greene via AP)

MESFIN FEKADU
AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For saxophonist Jimmy Greene, whose daughter died in the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting, earning Grammy nomina-

tions for his album inspired by his late daughter is "bittersweet."

Greene earned his first pair of Grammy nominations this week, including best arrangement, instruments

and vocals for "When I Come Home" and best jazz instrumental album for "Beautiful Life," which he created in honor of Ana Marquez-Greene and also features her vocals.

"It's amazing, but to be honest with you I wish the album never had to be made," Greene said in a phone interview earlier this week. "I wish my little girl were here; that I didn't have to pay tribute to her, that I could have her here. It's very bittersweet."

"Beautiful Life," Greene's 10th album as a band leader, was released last year. He started working on the album not long after his 6-year-old daughter was gunned down with 19 other first graders and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut.

"It was incredibly painful at the time the songs were written. It was a few months after she was killed," he said. "I was at my work station where I compose and my face wet with tears doing a lot of the writing, but I really felt like I wanted the world to hear a little bit about how my daughter lived."

Greene said Ana enjoyed singing and he juxtaposed home video recordings of her voice with his own

composition on "Saludos/ Come Thou Almighty King," the opening track of his latest album.

"It was important for me also to have people hear her own voice. She loved to sing and she had a beautiful singing voice," he said. Greene made the album — which also features his 11-year-old son Isaiah — with the help of Norman and David Chesky of Chesky Records, who helped fund and produce the album. "It wouldn't have happened without them, and they sought no profit from this at all. A portion of the proceeds from "Beautiful Life" will benefit two organizations: The Artists Collective, where Greene studied and taught, and The Ana Grace Project, founded by his wife Nelba Marquez-Greene, a marriage and family therapist.

"(We're) trying to promote empathy and compassion in young kids to hopefully prevent these instances of gun violence like the one that took my daughter's life," he said of The Ana Grace Project. □

B.B. King's Mississippi gravesite getting memorial courtyard

EMILY PETTUS
Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Nearly seven months after blues legend B.B. King died, his Mississippi gravesite is being turned into a serene spot where blues fans can pay their respects.

At ceremony Friday a black granite marker will be unveiled, engraved with his signature, that will become the centerpiece of a memorial courtyard outside the B.B. King Museum and

Delta Interpretive Center in Indianola.

The courtyard, with benches, eventually will be surrounded by walls that alternate between solid panels engraved with song titles and wooden slats that allow breezes to pass through the space.

King was 89 when he died May 14 at his home in Las Vegas.

He was buried two weeks later at the museum in Indianola, the hometown in

the Mississippi Delta cotton country where he first sang and played guitar on street corners as a young man and where he continued to play annual concerts until a year before his death.

"One kind favor I'll ask of you / One kind favor I'll ask of you / It's one kind favor I'll ask of you / Please see that my grave is kept clean," King sang on his Grammy-winning 2008 album — a standard recorded in the

1920s by Texas bluesman Blind Lemon Jefferson.

King's grave was kept clean, but not extravagant, in the first few months after his burial.

On Sept. 15 — the day before what would have been his 90th birthday — the site was surrounded by a chain-link fence and marked only by a patch of artificial turf and a large wreath of purple silk flowers.

Expenses to develop the

memorial courtyard will be paid partly by King's estate and partly by private donations to the museum. Mississippi's economic development agency is also contributing about \$50,000 because it's a tourist attraction.

"He was a great man, and we are honored to have his final resting place here at the place that bears his name," museum director Malika Polk-Lee said in a statement this week. □

'Rich in Faith' brings young pastors to reality TV spotlight

LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As a MTV executive, Rod Aissa helped develop "Newlyweds: Nick & Jessica," the reality series that peered into the lives of Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson.

Aissa, now at Oxygen Media, believes he's found equally engaging young marrieds who will appeal to today's millennials. The twist: the couple featured in Oxygen's "Rich in Faith" are pastors, not pop stars. The reality show features Rich Wilkerson Jr. and his wife DawnChere, both 31 and offspring of ministers, as they launch a youth-oriented Miami church and grapple with balancing work and home life.

Oxygen, which targets 18-to-34-year-old female viewers, is "trying to connect them to relatable characters, experiences and milestones of their lives," said Aissa, executive vice president for original programming and development. The Wilkersons are appealing, he said, and the fact that their "business happens to be religion" brings an added dimension.



This photo provided by Oxygen shows, DawnChere Wilkerson, left, and Rich Wilkerson in the "Gator Nuggets" episode in season 1 of "Rich in Faith."

(Matthew Burke/Oxygen via AP)

"What I liked about it for Oxygen is the overlay of the discussion of faith," he said. "We know from brand research ... that traditional things like family and relationship to God and spirituality are still high on their (the audience's) list."

Rich Wilkerson, who started with his parents' ministry in Miami, brings a celebrity connection to the series: He married Kanye West and Kim Kardashian.

Vous, the church the Wilkersons are founding, has a certain glitz of its own, with music, dance, strobe lights and fog machines added to appeal to their generation. They take their ministry to the street as well, meeting people on their own ground. The Wilkersons say it's their relationship with God and parishioners that's important, not TV celebrity or its trappings.

"So often it's really easy, especially for people of faith, to sit around and report negatively about the status quo of where our nation is or where entertainment is," said Rich Wilkerson, author of the newly published "Sandcastle Kings," which includes a blurb from Kim Kardashian West (Wilkerson's optimism and "passion for the Word of God are contagious," she said).

"Our idea was to do something that's encouraging, that's positive out there. We want to show people you can have faith, even in

this busy, chaotic world we live in right now," he said. While he's not a reality TV watcher, Wilkerson said, "no matter what you think about it, it's the language of our culture. We want to be people who are trying to take every opportunity to spread the message of faith." Faith and reality TV have become close companions. A number of shows are based on families for whom religion is a visible part of their lives, including UP's "Bringing Up Bates," in its third season. Others focus on the clergy, among them Oxygen's "Preachers" franchise that started in Los Angeles and moved on to include other cities. "Preachers of LA" was criticized by some African-Americans ministers who said the show could foster the inaccurate idea that preachers are in it for fame and wealth.

Hollywood's fascination with pairing reality and faith has dubious roots, said Dave Johnson, a film and TV writer-producer ("Against the Grain," "Doc") and a Parents Television Council advisory board member. □

Kelly Rowland looks to create girl group on new BET series



Recording artist Kelly Rowland, formerly of Destiny's Child, poses for a portrait in Atlanta. Rowland is recording a solo album and filming a documentary series called "Chasing Destiny," which premieres on BET in April.

(AP Photo/John Bazemore)

J. LANDRUM Jr.
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — If fans are anticipating a Destiny's Child reunion album, Kelly Rowland says don't expect

one anytime soon.

These days, Rowland is focused on recording solo music and filming a documentary series called "Chasing Destiny," which

premieres on BET in April. She completed a three-city quest in New York, Atlanta and Los Angeles with veteran choreographer Frank Gatson — who serves as

Beyoncé and Rowland's creative director — auditioning talent in hopes of finding the next superstar girl group.

"I don't care where they are, where they live, where they're from, their background — I just want to make sure that I have girls in the group who are not afraid to work, who are excited about a great opportunity, who have goals and think, and breathe, and sleep music," Rowland said in an interview last week.

The Grammy winner said she wants to create a girl group for this generation of music fans. The pop charts currently include Fifth Harmony, who had a major hit this year with "Worth It," and British group Little Mix, who won "The X Factor" in 2011 and released their third album last month.

But Rowland believes there's room for more.

"When Destiny's Child was around I remember there was Xscape, there was SWV, there was En Vogue, there was the Cheetah Girls," she said.

"There were all these different types of groups, and these different types of girls groups, and there's just one (now) — you're kidding me? Like, get out of here. It should definitely be more."

Rowland said she and Gatson aren't sure how many girls will be selected for the group. Gatson said he already held two secret audition sessions in New Orleans and New York without Rowland, in hopes of finding more candidates. More than 70 prospects auditioned for them in each city. □

South America Hacker Team Targets Dissidents, Journalists

FRANK BAJAK
AP Technology Writer

LIMA, Peru (AP) — A shadowy cyber-espionage group that sent malware to the prosecutor whose mysterious death transfixed Argentina early this year has been hitting targets in left-leaning nations across South America, the Internet watchdog group Citizen Lab reported Wednesday.

The breadth and brazenness of the hackers' activity bear the hallmarks of state sponsorship, the researchers found. So do its targets.

The group has been attacking opposition figures and independent journalists in Ecuador with spyware. It also ran dummy websites. The most elaborate, geared toward Venezuela, was a constantly updated news site featuring dubiously sourced "scoops" on purported corruption among that country's ruling socialists. In Ecuador, a similarly bogus site seemed tailored to attract disgruntled police officers.

The researchers launched the three-month probe after determining that spyware found on the smartphone of Argentine prosecutor Alberto Nisman was written to send pilfered data to the same command-and-control structure as malware sent to targets infected in Ecuador. They said the hackers had a "keen and systematic interest in the political opposition and the independent press" in the three nations, all of which have been run by allied left-wing governments. That suggests it may have operated on behalf of one or more of those governments, the report said.

In September, the hackers threatened a Citizen Lab researcher as he poked around in a U.S.-based machine the group had infected.

"We're going to analyze your brain with a bullet — and your family's, too," read a message that popped up on his computer screen. "You like playing

the spy and going where you shouldn't, well you should know that it has a cost — your life!"

uador. Others received a message falsely signed by an opposition leader claiming to reveal names

hosted by companies based in Argentina, Brazil, France, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay and the United

ware could even hijack microphones and webcams. The malware was skillfully packaged to avoid detec-



Ecuadorian journalist Janet Hinostroza poses for a photo at the Teleamazonas tv station in Quito, Ecuador, Monday, Dec. 7, 2015. Hinostroza, who won a 2013 press freedom award from the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, said she was hacked in January and then again in August, a month after the interior minister claimed she was involved in a plot to overthrow the government.
(AP Photo/Dolores Ochoa)

That's rare behavior among professional hackers, perhaps indicating little fear of criminal prosecution, said Morgan Marquis-Boire, one of the researchers.

In November, the group attempted to infect the computer of an Associated Press reporter with a phishing attack aimed at stealing his Google password.

The researchers identified the group through intertwined Internet domains and tell-tale digital signatures on emails sent to infect computers. They said it had been active for seven years, finding it to have used hosting services in Brazil since at least 2008.

Determining who is behind the hacking, however, may be possible only with court orders due to Internet hosting companies' privacy policies.

In two examples, targets received an email from a phony organization purporting to oppose President Rafael Correa of Ec-

of people investigated by Ecuador's espionage agency.

Those who clicked on embedded links had their computers infected with spyware that secretly culled information from users' machines and sent it to servers run by the group, which researchers dubbed "Packrat."

"We believe this is a highly targeted operation," said John Scott-Railton, lead researcher on The Citizen Lab team at the University of Toronto's Munk School for Global Affairs. "Packrat seems to carefully choose and then relentlessly go after its targets."

The group has used the same Internet domains for years despite some exposure, a technical convenience that would be shunned by garden-variety cybercriminals wary of being identified by law enforcement agencies.

The researchers found at least 35 different types of booby-trapped files, and operated from domains

States.

For much of the past two years, about two dozen "seeding" sites resided at one time or other on servers owned by U.S.-based GoDaddy.com LLC, a web hosting company. The domain names that GoDaddy hosted included soporte-yahoo.com, update-outlook.com, mgoogle.us and login-office365.com.

The researchers notified most of the providers Friday, asking that Packrat's known infrastructure be shuttered.

GoDaddy spokesman Nick Fuller said the company takes immediate action when it identifies a problem website but did not elaborate.

Citizen Lab labeled the operation Packrat because the hackers use commercially available packages of remote access trojans — or RATs — that infect computers and smartphones, allowing hackers to capture keystrokes, emails and text messages. The soft-

tion by anti-virus programs, the researchers found.

The investigation was begun after it was determined that Packrat had targeted Nisman, the Argentine special prosecutor found dead of a gunshot wound last January while trying — unsuccessfully — to bring criminal charges against Argentina's president.

Researchers said Packrat sent a top Argentine journalist, Jorge Lanata, the identical virus that Nisman received a month before his death.

The virus' digital fingerprints showed it was built to communicate with the same Internet domains being used to spy on Ecuadorean opposition figures, who identified Packrat malware in their email with search scripts written by the researchers.

Most of the targets identified were in Ecuador, though researcher Scott-Railton cautioned that they likely represent a sliver of the group's activity. □